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**Front Cover:** Christopher Schneider, OFM, looks for students arriving at Our Lady of Good Harbor School in Buras, Louisiana, August 30, 1962, as picketers protest school integration (Courtesy of the Associated Press).

**Back Cover:** Leander Perez rallying supporters outside of Our Lady of Good Harbor, Buras, Louisiana, 1962. Perez, a fierce opponent of integration, helped shut down the school by inciting school parents and local residents to boycott the school. Some blamed Perez for the violence and culture of intimidation that prevented a successful integration of Our Lady of Good Harbor (Courtesy of the Associated Press).

## Contents

<b>DIVERSITY IN THE CATHOLIC SOUTHWEST</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>“MEXICANS MIGHT SOMEDAY BE THE SALVATION OF THE CHURCH”: THE WORK OF THE BISHOPS’ COMMITTEE FOR THE SPANISH SPEAKING, 1945-1970</b> By Todd Scribner	<b>2</b>
<b>JUDGE LEANDER PEREZ AND THE FRANCISCANS OF OUR LADY OF GOOD HARBOR: A SCHOOL INTEGRATION BATTLE IN BURAS, LOUISIANA, 1962-1965</b> By David J. Endres	<b>17</b>
<b>“THE MOST EXTRAORDINARY ORDINARY PERSON”: CHARLENE RICHARD, THE LITTLE CAJUN SAINT, AND THE GIFT OF REDEMPTIVE SUFFERING</b> By Nancy Autin	<b>26</b>
<b>NOTES AND DOCUMENTS</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>THE GRAND OLD MAN: CHRISTOPHER EDWARD BYRNE, FOURTH BISHOP OF GALVESTON (1918-1950)</b> By Sister Madeleine Grace, C.V.I.	<b>42</b>
<b>THE GOTHIC CHURCHES OF THE DALLAS DIOCESE: A PHOTOGRAPHIC ESSAY</b> By Steven T. Landregan	<b>49</b>
<b>BOOK REVIEWS</b> Edited by Thomas W. Jodziewicz	<b>61</b>
<b>ARTICLE ABSTRACTS</b>	<b>73</b>

## Book Reviews

John Francis Burke. *Building Bridges, Not Walls: Nourishing Diverse Cultures in Faith/Construyamos puentes, no muros: Alimentar a las diversas culturas en la fe.*

BY GILBERTO M. HINOJOSA 61

Gerald M. Cattaro and Charles J. Russo, eds. *Gravissimum Educationis: Golden Opportunities in American Catholic Education 50 Years After Vatican II.*

BY JOHN FRANCIS BURKE 62

John E. Dean. *How Myth Became History: Texas Exceptionalism in the Borderlands.*

BY AMY M. PORTER 63

Jesús F. de la Teja. *Faces of Béxar: Early San Antonio & Texas.*

BY THOMAS W. JODZIEWICZ 63

Maurice M. Dixon, Jr. *The Artistic Odyssey of Higinio V. Gonzales: A Tinsmith and Poet in Territorial New Mexico.*

BY CATHERINE CAESAR 65

Steven K. Green. *Inventing Christian America: The Myth of the Religious Founding.*

BY JOHN F. QUINN 66

Roberto Ramón Lint Sagarena. *Aztlán and Arcadia: Religion, Ethnicity, and the Creation of Place.*

BY MARK PETERSEN 67

Mario J. Paredes. *The History of the National Encuentros: Hispanic Americans in the One Catholic Church.*

BY PIA SEPTIÉN 68

Christopher Shannon and Christopher O. Blum. *The Past as Pilgrimage: Narrative, Tradition & the Renewal of Catholic History.*

BY THOMAS W. JODZIEWICZ 69

Julia G. Young. *Mexican Exodus: Emigrants, Exiles and Refugees of the Cristero War.*

BY RICHARD FOSSEY 71

## Diversity in the Catholic Southwest

In previous issues I have written an introductory essay attempting to find a central theme for all the articles that appear in that particular issue. In this issue, I can identify no central theme emerging from the fine essays contained in this volume other than diversity. Taken together, the articles illustrate the great diversity of Catholic history and culture in the Catholic Southwest.

Todd Scribner's article on the Bishops' Committee for the Spanish Speaking argues persuasively that the American Catholic hierarchy's interest in the welfare of Hispanic Catholics is not a recent phenomenon but dates back to the early twentieth century. Thus it is unfair to say that the American bishops' principled stance on immigration is primarily motivated by the desire to bolster Roman Catholic membership rolls during a time when a significant number of American Catholics have left the Church.

Father David Endres' essay tells us the story of the Franciscan friars and sisters who operated Our Lady of Good Harbor School in Buras, Louisiana, the first racially integrated Catholic school in the New Orleans Archdiocese. His essay chronicles the Franciscans' physical courage in the face of violent threats and even arson as they confronted Judge Leander Perez, a virulent racist whose campaign to stop the racial integration of Catholic schools in the Diocese of New Orleans led Archbishop Joseph Rummel to excommunicate him.

In contrast to Father Endres' account of courage in the face of physical violence, Nancy Autin brings us the story of Charlene Richard, a 12-year-old Catholic girl living in South Louisiana who courageously faced death from lymphatic leukemia with great dignity and faith. Professor Autin's interviews with two priests who were intimately involved with the life of Charlene have preserved powerful testimony for the canonization of this little girl, Louisiana's own Maria Goretti, who continues to inspire the Catholic people of Louisiana's Acadian region.

In our "Notes and Documents" section, Sister Madeleine Grace, C.V.I. contributes a biographical essay on Bishop Christopher Edward Byrne, the fourth bishop of the Galveston Diocese. Her essay gives readers a glimpse of Bishop Byrne's personality, his sense of humor, and the strength of his leadership as bishop of a growing Texas metropolitan area during the years before Vatican II.

Finally, Steven Landregan produced a photographic essay of the Gothic churches of the Dallas Diocese as they existed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The churches that Mr. Landregan introduces were all constructed at a time when the Catholic population of North Texas was quite small, and each Gothic church stood in testimony to an ancient faith nestled in the midst of a dominant and often hostile Protestant Texas culture.

Together these essays are testimony to strength, courage, fortitude, and faith in the Catholic Southwest. In a vital sense, these essays are a tribute to the continuing Catholic story in the American Southwest, a story that began with the Spanish missionaries and continues to this day.

Richard Fossey  
Editor

# “Mexicans might someday be the salvation of the Church”: The Work of the Bishops’ Committee for the Spanish Speaking, 1945-1970

By Todd Scribner\*

## Introduction

During his visit to the United States in 2008, Pope Benedict XVI frequently referenced the issue of migration and encouraged the American Church to continue welcoming immigrants, sharing with them their joys and hopes, and supporting them in their pains and sorrows.<sup>1</sup> Four years later during the U.S. bishops’ *ad limina* trip to the Vatican, the pope expanded on his earlier praise of the American Church’s response to migrants, declaring that this concern is particularly evident in “the long-standing commitment of the American Bishops to immigration reform. This is clearly a difficult and complex issue from the civil and political, as well as the social and economic, but above all from the human point of view. It is thus of profound concern to the Church, since it involves ensuring the just treatment and the defense of the human dignity of immigrants.”<sup>2</sup> As comprehensive immigration reform legislation became heated during the Bush administration, the bishops have remained strong backers of such efforts.<sup>3</sup>

Critics of the Catholic bishops took issue with the pope’s rhetoric of support and have remained long suspect of the bishops’ advocacy on behalf of this issue. One commentator noted that the immigration reform issue “as it now stands is a baldly political business, and that’s as true of the bishops as it is of the politicians: votes for the latter; devotees for the former.”<sup>4</sup> Another critic, Representative Tom Tancredo (R-CO), took on the Pope’s earlier comments directly, citing a *Wall Street Journal* article highlighting the loss of adherents that the Catholic Church had experienced in recent years and the demographic challenges this brought with it. He said that he suspected “the pope’s immigration comments may have less to do with spreading the gospel than they do about recruiting new members of the church. This isn’t preaching; it is faith-based marketing.”<sup>5</sup>

As a basis for its story, *The Wall Street Journal* appealed to the findings from a newly published survey by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, titled the *U.S. Religious Landscape Survey*.<sup>6</sup> While wide ranging in scope, the report pointed to the findings that younger Catholics have abandoned the faith in favor of another religious tradition or have become largely indifferent to religion altogether. While 31% of Americans were raised Catholic, only 24% currently define themselves as such. As a portion of the entire population, approximately 10% of the American population was raised Catholic but had since left the Church. Curi-

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\* Todd Scribner is the Education Outreach Coordinator at United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

ously, although losing large numbers of Catholics to other religious traditions or to none at all, the proportion of Catholics to the total population has remained relatively constant.<sup>7</sup>

What has kept the Catholic share of the population steady since the early 1970s was the influx of Hispanic Catholics, primarily from Mexico and Latin America. Mexican migrants, who made up a plurality of immigrants coming to the U.S. (34%) during this period, were overwhelmingly Catholic (72%). Of immigrants coming from other Latin American countries, slightly more than half identified with the Catholic faith (51%).<sup>8</sup> While nearly half of adult Catholics under the age of 40 are Hispanic, they account for only 17% of Catholics aged 60 or older.<sup>9</sup> Overall, Hispanics continue to make up an increasingly larger proportion of the Catholic Church in the United States, with one third of all Catholics being Hispanic.<sup>10</sup>

Such criticisms depend on the purported self-serving interests, and perhaps even the perceived desperation of the Catholic hierarchy in the United States. Such criticisms could easily be enumerated further. They generally take for granted that the primary motivation for supporting a legalization process for unauthorized and particularly Hispanic migrants is not due to some mission focused motivation or social justice convictions, but self-interest. Given that the Catholic Church has failed to form young, native-born Catholics into the faith and has, as a consequence, lost many of them to other religions or to none at all, there is need for a new constituency. The influx of Hispanics provides such an audience; by advocating on behalf of the millions of Catholic-heavy and unauthorized Hispanic migrants, the church could ensure that their pews, not to mention their coffers, would remain filled for some time to come.

While this line of argument makes a kind of intuitive sense, such criticisms are based on a narrow historical horizon that fails to appreciate the length of time that the bishops have engaged Hispanics living in the United States. It is not wrong to argue that the bishops are deeply concerned with filling church pews with the Hispanic faithful, but it is error to assume that this effort only began only when a demographic crisis emerged in the late twentieth century American Catholic Church. However uneven efforts to engage and support Latino communities by Catholic leadership have sometimes been, they are longstanding and well-established.

This essay will focus primarily on one major avenue through which the Catholic bishops began to systematize their outreach to Hispanics: the establishment and development of the Bishops' Committee for the Spanish Speaking in 1945. During the twentieth century the Church's engagement with Hispanics became increasingly systematized on the local and national levels. This essay will begin with the creation of the National Catholic Welfare Conference's Bureau of Immigration in 1920, briefly compare its activity along the Eastern seaboard ports of entry with that of the Southwest border, and highlight some of its immigration work done in El Paso and in the surrounding area.

The bishops' engagement with Latinos became more regionally focused and interconnected following the establishment of the Bishops Committee for the Spanish Speaking (BCSS) in 1945. By the late 1960s this engagement became institutionalized on a national level once the headquarters of the BCSS was moved from San Antonio to the NCWC's Washington, DC office. While this is a study that attempts to expand on the existing literature related to the Church's engagement with Catholic Latinos, it is also an institutional history that examines the tensions that developed with the centralization of power in the Washington, DC Bishops' Conference, on the one hand, and efforts to devolve power to the local level on the other.<sup>11</sup>

## Catholic Immigrants and the Protestant Challenge

While not the exclusive motivation, early “official” efforts to engage incoming migrant populations by Church leadership were motivated as much by concerns related to Protestant proselytizing as anything else; this is as true for Hispanics entering across the southwest border as it was for Europeans arriving in port cities along the East Coast. Given the adversarial relationship that existed between Catholics and Protestants, the defensive posture taken by the Church is hardly surprising. As Catholics began to integrate and, in the process, more fully Americanize during the course of the twentieth century, these same outreach efforts have taken on a more humanitarian oriented hue that emphasized a mission focused motivation.<sup>12</sup>

In an October 29, 1920, letter to John J. Burke, C.S.P., the General Secretary of the NCWC, Seattle judge Dudley G. Wooten wrote to complain about the treatment of Catholic immigrants as they arrived at Ellis Island. In particular, he expressed concern about reports that the federal government had given authority to the YMCA to take charge of new arrivals from other countries until they reached their final destination. Placing Catholic immigrants under the control of Protestant organizations, he argued, amounted to an “outrageous violation of every principle of Americanism and of the fundamental doctrine of religious freedom,” opened the door for Protestant proselytizing, and gave an unfair opportunity to “convert him [the Catholic immigrant] to some one of the other discordant sects that are all banded together against the Catholic Church.”<sup>13</sup>

These concerns were shared by NCWC leadership, who had initiated a fact finding mission to the Eastern port cities the previous summer. The purpose of this mission was to determine more precisely the conditions confronting Catholic immigrants following their arrival to the United States. Led by Elizabeth Vaughan Dobbins of the Social Action Department of the NCWC, the investigation focused on Boston and Philadelphia and concluded that “in neither city is there a Catholic society equipped to do, or engaged in,” activities related to immigration aid work. The lack of a Catholic presence left migrants vulnerable to proselytizing by Protestants, increasing the likelihood that these migrants would leave the Church.<sup>14</sup> Paired with similar concerns in New York City, alongside the increasingly federal character of immigration policy and the need to engage it in Washington, DC, the NCWC established the Bureau of Immigration in December 1920. Bruce Mohler was soon thereafter named its Executive Director. Plans were developed to establish a presence on Ellis Island and other East Coast port cities, so as to protect Catholic migrants from an unwanted Protestant welcome.

A similar dynamic played out along the U.S.-Mexican border. In early 1921, the Executive Secretary of the National Council of Catholic Men, Michael Slattery, forwarded a letter to Msgr. Burke of the NCWC that highlighted the serious immigration problem confronting the Church in El Paso, and expressed concern that Protestant groups were spending large sums of money to proselytize newly arriving migrants.<sup>15</sup> He inquired about the possibility of the NCWC providing funds to assist in the welfare work of the largely Latino populations living in the area. Fr. John J. Burke eventually consented and took steps to establish a satellite office there, through which the bishops could provide various forms of support to Mexican migrants as they arrived. Staff members at the El Paso office were tasked specifically to assist the ongoing efforts of the National Council of Catholic Men, who were already active in the immigration field.<sup>16</sup> A social worker, Caroline Boone, was appointed to establish and run the center. She served in the position from 1922-1926 before abruptly resigning



and being replaced by Cleofas Calleros, who headed the El Paso office for the next several decades (1926-1968).<sup>17</sup>

Although Protestant proselytizing of Mexican migrants was a paramount concern for Catholic leadership throughout this period, their spiritual needs were only one component of the work of the satellite office in El Paso, which engaged in a variety of more mundane activities on behalf of Mexicans. Initiatives included the establishment of Americanization programs, the provision of legal support to Mexicans caught in detention, and the provision of material aid.

Within a decade of the establishment of the El Paso office, NCWC leadership investigated the possibility of expanding their immigrant aid work across Texas and even into Mexico. On February 11, 1923, Caroline Boone responded to a letter from Bruce Mohler requesting that she examine whether it would be of benefit to hire an immigrant aid worker for Brownsville, Texas.<sup>18</sup> Central to this investigation, Boone visited a Charity Home and hospital in Brownsville that was currently being managed by a small contingent of Sisters of Mercy. The financial situation there was not promising and concerns had arisen that Protestant groups might attempt a takeover. That an estimated three quarters of the population were Catholic and a large percentage of them were Mexican, gave rise to familiar concerns that Protestants would push out any institutionalized Catholic presence and as a consequence monopolize all charity work among these populations. Boone suggested that Fr. Burke consider hiring an immigrant aid worker for work in Brownsville and that, ideally, “we should have Laredo, Eagle Pass, and Nogales also covered.”<sup>19</sup>

Despite Boone’s suggestion, Bruce Mohler decided not to pursue establishing a satellite office in Brownsville. In a letter to Bishop Emmanuel Ledvina of Corpus Christi, Texas, he noted that the total amount of immigration through Brownsville was considerably lower than on other parts of the Texas border. Citing admissions for the year ending June 30, 1921, El Paso was by far the highest, with 11,450 admissions, followed by Laredo (6,868), Nogales (3,517), and Eagle Pass (2,570). Brownsville only admitted 847 Mexican immigrants for the entire year. Based on the numbers, if Brownsville was to receive an immigrant aid worker to facilitate processing and provide support, Mohler asserted that a similar move would have to be made at other points of entry.<sup>20</sup> The lack of funding to staff positions in all of these locations was likely a factor in this decision.

Although NCWC leadership refrained from staffing an office at the Brownsville port of entry, the Bureau did take steps to establish one on the Mexican side of the U.S.-Mexico border in Juarez. As with Brownsville, Mohler initially declined Caroline Boone’s proposal in 1923 to maintain office quarters in Juarez. Nevertheless, within a couple of years the El Paso office opened office space on the Mexican side of the border to engage migrants as they were preparing to enter the United States.<sup>21</sup> Boone was able to secure the endorsement of a Mexican delegation who were attending a 1924 immigration conference in Rome and who praised the work of the Bureau of Immigration in El Paso. This appears to have laid the groundwork for the opening of the Juarez office.<sup>22</sup>

Temporarily closed by order of the Mexican government in the summer of 1926, the Juarez office reopened several months later. Correspondence from Bruce Mohler and to NCWC staff in both Washington, DC and El Paso following its opening revealed a tension between the office and the local conditions of 1920s Mexico. Following its reopening, objections were raised as to the use of the word “Catholic” in any sort of identifying manner in the insignia

on the building or for marketing purposes.<sup>23</sup> The aversion to a Catholic presence in Mexican public life reflected the contentious political conditions during this period, which centered on the relationship between Catholics and Plutarco Elias Calles' anti-Catholic regime.

Beginning in 1926 and for three years thereafter a group of Catholic loyalists, later dubbed the *cristeros*, took up arms against the Mexican government's anticlerical reforms. The proximate cause of this upheaval lay with President Calles' decision to enforce the anticlerical provisions in the Mexican Constitution, which were included in a revision of the Constitution that occurred in 1917. These provisions significantly expanded the power of the federal government over the Church, and included restrictions on religious celebrations and the education of Mexican youth.<sup>24</sup> Although relations between the Mexican government and the Catholic Church were strained even before the passage of the new constitution, they became progressively more strained in the following decade. With Calles' decision to be more intentional in his efforts to enforce the recently instituted constitutional provisions, relations only grew worse still.

In response, the NCWC Administrative Committee issued a formal statement in April 1926 that criticized the Mexican government for the religious persecution of Catholics. Condemning the confiscation of church property, the exiling of priests, and the banishment of religious education from the schools, the Committee called on the federal government to pressure the Mexican government to reinstate the civil and religious rights of the Mexican populace.<sup>25</sup> That same day the Committee issued a letter to President Calvin Coolidge, which reiterated these complaints and called on him to take the necessary steps to ensure that the religious freedom of the Mexican people was protected.<sup>26</sup> Such efforts did little to diminish the violent upheavals that ensued. From 1926-1929, some 90,000 Mexicans died, with thousands more fleeing the war torn region to find safety in the United States. As many as 2,500 religious refugees, including priests, religious sisters, and bishops joined the flight northward. Many of these migrants settled in and around San Antonio, with others fleeing to cities across the United States, including Chicago, Detroit and Los Angeles.<sup>27</sup>

### **San Antonio: The Seat of the Bishops' Committee for the Spanish Speaking**

Although Mexicans fleeing the persecution in their homeland fled to cities across the United States, of particular importance for our story is San Antonio, given the central role that Archbishop Robert Lucey (1941-1969) played in expanding the Church's outreach to Mexicans on a regional and national level.<sup>28</sup> In particular, while the NCWC had established an important local presence along the Southwest border, and specifically in El Paso, in its effort to engage Mexican migrants, Archbishop Lucey led in the establishment of the Bishops' Committee for the Spanish Speaking.

Born on March 16, 1981, Robert E. Lucey was the son of a Southern Pacific Railroad freight conductor who was killed when Lucey was just nine years old. According to his biographer, the circumstances of his father's death and the failure of the railroad to take any sort of responsibility for it, alongside its refusal to provide anything beyond a nominal form of compensation to his family, inspired in Lucey a concern for social justice that he carried with him throughout the rest of his life.<sup>29</sup> Ordained in Rome in 1916, Lucey spent the next eighteen years as a priest in the archdiocese of Los Angeles before being consecrated as the bishop of Amarillo, Texas. Seven years later he was named as Archbishop of San Antonio, where he remained until his retirement in 1969. His interest in social justice was paired with

a strong ecclesiastical conservative bent that alienated many of the clergy who were under his authority. While such an approach did not prove overly problematic during his early career, by the 1960s Bishop Lucey's autocratic style of leadership clashed with the spirit of the post-Vatican II period in which laity and clergy alike often demanded more autonomy from Church authority.<sup>30</sup>

In his opening address at the Conference on Spanish Speaking People of the Southwest (July, 1943), Archbishop Robert Lucey highlighted the systemic discrimination aimed at Mexicans living in the United States. Racism was rampant in many sectors of the educational system, labor exploitation and discrimination a real concern, and the lack of organized political power an obstacle to Latino communities.<sup>31</sup> Discriminatory behavior by the Anglo community too often disregarded Mexicans' civil rights, measured their worth by their economic productivity, and consigned them to a state of “undeserved poverty.” Well into the second half of the twentieth century, Latinos remained on the margins of American life. Highlighting these injustices, Archbishop Lucey criticized the “many Anglo-Americans who have shown stupidity, ignorance, and malice in treating their Mexican brethren with injustice, discrimination and disdain. It is not a lovely story; it is profoundly disturbing because it tells of poverty and tragedy, of disease, delinquency and death.”<sup>32</sup>

While claiming that in the previous half century the American Church leaders stood nearly alone as a constructive force on behalf of their Mexican brethren, the Archbishop overlooked the ways in which the local Church often participated in the marginalization of and discrimination against these populations. For a long time, Masses were often segregated, Mexicans were prohibited from going to Church at certain times, and discriminatory practices were reported against Mexican children in parochial schools. As in secular society, Mexicans often struggled to secure representation within Church leadership, and seminaries generally marginalized seminarians of Mexican heritage, not to mention suppressing any use of their Spanish language.<sup>33</sup>

Efforts to address these various injustices were forthcoming. At the 1944 annual bishops meeting, Archbishop Samuel Stritch proposed the development of a program that would focus on the welfare of Mexicans living in the United States, and which would be funded by the American Board of Catholic Missions and the Catholic Extension Society. This proposal was approved unanimously by the bishops. As a follow up to this decision, a meeting of the bishops of the four provinces of the Southwest was convened in Oklahoma City (January 1945). It was here that the Bishops' Committee for the Spanish Speaking (BCSS) was born.<sup>34</sup> A national office was eventually consolidated in San Antonio under the oversight of Archbishop Lucey.

As established, the BCSS had three main objectives: the construction of an infrastructure that would provide for the material and spiritual needs of Spanish speaking people, including settlement houses, medical clinics, and catechetical centers; an effort to care for migrant workers and families, including educational programs, leadership training, and health services; and “an intensive program of spiritual welfare” that encouraged vocations among Mexicans.<sup>35</sup> Structurally it consisted of seventeen archbishops and bishops from the four Southwestern Provinces, maintained an executive board of four archbishops, and instituted a council that would be comprised of clergy and laity from the various dioceses of the provinces. A regional office would help to run the daily activities of the Committee, with the aim of “dramatizing the Catholic traditions of the Southwest in the Catholic press and secular papers.”<sup>36</sup>

Leadership of the BCSS quickly turned its attention to the needs associated with migrant labor. With the launch of the Bracero Program in 1942, which brought in 220,000 Mexican migrant workers during its first five years, and hundreds of thousands more over the next two decades, the Catholic Church sought to proactively respond to the many Catholics who were included in these waves of migrants. Writing in January 1945 to the Apostolic Delegate to the United States, Cardinal Amleto Giovanni Cicognani, Bishop Martinez of Mexico City expressed concern for Mexican migrant laborers living in the United States and the need to provide for their spiritual and material needs. Bishop Martinez's concerns were brought to the attention of the BCSS, which approached Msgr. Howard Carroll, the General Secretary of the NCWC, to learn if the Bureau of Immigration would be able to provide data related to the distribution and geographical location of these laborers. It was decided that the Bureau, primarily through its El Paso office, would work with the Committee to gather such information, which could then be sent to diocesan and parish entities that could respond accordingly.<sup>37</sup>

The BCSS' efforts on behalf of migrant Mexican labor continued across the lifespan of the Bracero program. At their 1956 Committee meeting, the bishops present voted in favor of the recommendation that the bracero program be terminated.<sup>38</sup> Concerned about the treatment of migrant workers and the need to implement protections that would secure their rights, Archbishop Lucey remained a strong advocate for the establishment of labor unions, and highlighted the responsibility of parish priests to advocate on behalf of workers, and facilitate conversations between workers and union organizers.<sup>39</sup> Until the rights of Mexican laborers were respected and protected, they would be treated as a disposable people. Highlighting this sentiment, during the 1960 BCSS Committee meeting, Archbishop Lucey pointed to a conversation that he had once had with a grower, who apparently told him that with respect to the Bracero Program, "we used to buy slaves; now we rent them from the government."<sup>40</sup>

Expressing the Committees' thanks to Bruce Mohler and his commitment to support the BCSS' efforts on behalf of Mexican migrant laborers, Fr. John Birch, the Executive Secretary of the BCSS, stated that coordination between these two entities was a "tremendous one, and one which is occupying a permanent position in our planning for the future."<sup>41</sup> Mohler agreed that Mexicans posed a critical population for the Church and expressed his commitment to help provide for their needs as they adjusted to life in the US. He proceeded to recall a story related to Msgr. John Burke, who was told at one point by an unknown interlocutor that the Mexicans were really not worth the effort that the Church was putting into them. Burke responded that "the Mexicans might someday be the salvation of the Church in the United States."<sup>42</sup>

Although attention to migrant laborers remained an important aspect of the Committee's work throughout the 1950s, it is worth noting that their engagement in public life was not focused exclusively on this population of concern. It soon became apparent that all people of Mexican descent living in the U.S. often went overlooked, and just as often suffered from the same problems afflicting migrant laborers. Cleofas Calleros aptly summed up the situation when he wrote that "the Mexican family who has been living in Topeka, Kansas, and who was by the Santa Fe Railroad back in 1881... is in the same fix at the present time as the war worker or immigrant who came during 1940-1945. There is no difference in economic, social, or material situation."<sup>43</sup>

According to Calleros, Mexicans had long been used as an instrument of industry and expected to work for the lowest possible wage. This had a debilitating influence: fathers could barely provide for their families and rarely participated in the civic life of the nation, thus leaving them without a voice that could otherwise be exercised to improve the lives of their children. Mexican children were often lucky to finish the eighth grade, fewer still a few years in high school. This lack of opportunity opened the door to a vicious cycle of poverty and marginalization from the broader American community, from which the average Mexican remains estranged. To break this cycle, Calleros contended, it was crucial that the bishops of each diocese provide unstinting support for programs that would lift up Mexicans and commit clerical and lay committees to this purpose. The parish must become the center of recreational and educational activities under qualified leadership and supervision.<sup>44</sup> While not being so overt about it, his pointing out that the Catholic hierarchy needed to take responsibility for engaging Mexicans in their dioceses leaves one with the impression that he was unimpressed with what it had done to this point.

### **The BCSS Goes to Washington**

After returning to the United States following the close of the Second Vatican Council, The Catholic Bishops of the United States engaged in a substantial restructuring of the NCWC. In its place, they formed the National Conference of Catholic Bishops/United States Catholic Conference (NCCB/USCC). The NCCB was created for the purpose of engaging Church related issues, including liturgical questions, doctrine, and priestly life and ministry. Its counterpart, the USCC, focused on questions related to public policy and social welfare.<sup>45</sup> As a part of the restructuring process, the BCSS was placed in the newly established Department of Social Development, which was an office in the USCC, and renamed as the Division for the Spanish Speaking (DSS).<sup>46</sup> In a letter written to Bishop Joseph Bernardin in June 1968, Archbishop Lucey remarked that all social welfare groups, including the BCSS, ought to be grouped together in this department.<sup>47</sup> Antonio Tinajero, who had worked in the NCWC’s El Paso satellite office two decades earlier and more recently at the Office of Economic Opportunity in Washington, DC, was hired as its executive director.<sup>48</sup>

In addition to the specifically structural changes, efforts were made to establish regional offices that could carry out the work of the DSS across the country. For the first two decades of the BCSS’ existence much of their work focused in the American Southwest, primarily because of the surplus of Mexican labor that tended to concentrate in the region. Given the increasing diversity within the Spanish-speaking community across the country, with Cubans, migrating farmworkers from Mexico, Puerto Ricans, and others, settling into different parts of the country, it was deemed useful to establish regional offices that could engage these communities in a more direct manner. The establishment of state level Catholic Conferences, which had begun in the previous two years, provided the regional offices an opportunity to coordinate activities with a variety of state level offices and diocesan entities.<sup>49</sup> In addition to the San Antonio office, within a year a west coast office was opened in San Francisco alongside a midwestern office in Lansing Michigan.<sup>50</sup>

In 1969 the decision was made to move the national office from San Antonio to Washington, DC; the reasons underlying this decision were multifaceted. One of the primary reasons coincided with the rationale used to establish regional offices: there was a growing

recognition that Spanish speaking populations were beginning to settle in different parts of the country and were no longer concentrated primarily in the southwest part of the country. It was thought that, given the regional variations and concentrations of Spanish speaking populations, it would benefit to have the national office in Washington, DC to better coordinate activities nationally. There was also a growing emphasis on the legislative agenda for the Division, thus requiring a more established presence in the nation's Capital. Finally, there was a need to more closely coordinate the work between the Division and other offices and the move from San Antonio to Washington, DC would help facilitate this objective.<sup>51</sup> Taken together, this shift would strengthen "the representation of the interest of the Spanish-Speaking to the government, the great private organizations headquartered here, and with the other staff elements of the USCC."<sup>52</sup>

In a July 1970 memorandum, John Cosgrove updated Bishop Bernardin on the ongoing restructuring of the Division for the Spanish Speaking. Problems had already emerged. The usefulness of the regional offices as a mechanism to carry out the work of the Division had become less evident. With Spanish-speaking populations of different countries of origin residing in a majority of states, and this expansion only likely to grow in coming years, the three regional offices currently established were inadequate. Each regional office was responsible for covering, on average, seventeen states. As a way to cut costs it would be best, according to Cosgrove, to eliminate the regional offices and instead invest in field staff who could work with dioceses to improve their capabilities with respect to their outreach to Spanish-speaking populations. His recommendation was thus to continue the regional offices through the end of the year and to offer employment in Washington to Division staff currently employed in regional offices. Therefore, at the start of 1971, the Division would have a Washington office only.<sup>53</sup> An exchange between Archbishop Joseph McGucken of San Francisco and Bishop Bernardin confirmed this recommendation, with the former concurring that it was not necessary for the USCC to maintain a regional office in California; the Archdiocese of San Francisco and Los Angeles would be able to handle such outreach on their own.<sup>54</sup>

In addition to the phasing out of the regional offices, moving the national headquarters from San Antonio to Washington, DC also proved problematic. The original target date to transition the national office to Washington, DC was November 1, 1969, but this was put off until January 1, 1970 when it became clear that the mechanisms were not in place to move it at the earlier proposed date.<sup>55</sup> On the eve of the January 1 move, Bishop Bernardin wrote to Archbishop Furey of San Francisco to inform him that it was "necessary to postpone the move to Washington for a while."<sup>56</sup> The date was thus pushed back to September 1, 1970 and again to November first of that year. It eventually took place early in the following year.<sup>57</sup>

Although it appears that budgetary considerations contributed to the delays, one of the main obstacles was Antonio Tinajero. As early as November 1969, John Cosgrove and Msgr. Francis Hurley, the Assistant General Secretary of the Conference, had already become so frustrated that they were "talking about lowering the boom on Tony."<sup>58</sup> This was largely due to their understanding that he had been proactively delaying the move of the National Office to Washington, and had actively lobbied Hispanic leaders across the country for this purpose. Margaret Berry, the Executive Director of the National Federation of Settlements and Neighborhood Cities; Peter Tijerina, the Executive Director of the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund; and Cesar Chavez all expressed concerns related to this transition: moving the office to Washington, they believed, ran the risk of separating Tony

from the people that he was called to serve.<sup>59</sup> Other critics of the move complained that it would merely reinforce the centralization of power in Washington DC and further marginalize voices from the local community. Along these lines, a board member of the Midwest Regional Office, Fr. John Maurice, wrote in his letter of resignation that “the USCC is now one colossal bureaucracy with all decisions made from the top down with no real room for thought or ideas to come from local areas.”<sup>60</sup>

In addition to his behind-the-scenes lobbying, Antonio Tinajero was at times outspoken regarding the status of the Division and its place within the larger conference. For example, at the November meeting of the Bishops Committee of the Social Development Office, Tinajero was tasked with the responsibility of providing an overview of the Division for the Spanish Speaking and explain its purpose. According to the meeting notes for the event, Tinajero instead spent most of the time laying out complaints, including the failure of the bishops to properly fund the program and emphasizing what a mistake it would be to move the national office to Washington, DC, given that most of the work continued to take place in San Antonio. He went so far at one point as to argue that the move was going forward at least in part because, apparently “as a Mexican, I cannot be trusted.”<sup>61</sup>

Perhaps not surprisingly, the tensions between Tinajero and Conference leadership eventually led to his resignation, effective January 1, 1971, and the announcement of a new search that was commencing to fill the empty spot.<sup>62</sup> This position was eventually filled by Pablo (Paul) Sedillo. Under his direction the Division was raised in status and renamed the Secretariat for Hispanic Affairs in 1974.<sup>63</sup> It was also under his direction that the initial Encuentro was held in Washington in June 1972. One of the recommendations of the Encuentro was to raise the Division to that of a Secretariat, as it would provide more direct access to the General Secretary and, presumably, more influence to work on behalf of the Spanish-speaking people of the United States. The Ad Hoc Committee that was established to report on these conclusions admitted that more work needed to be done in this area to accomplish the goal, but did not at this point call for immediate action on this particular proposal.<sup>64</sup>

As late as 1970 Bishop Bernardin expressed his concern that the Church was failing in its effort to reach the Spanish-speaking community, noting that this failure would likely result in the young among them having “even less future relation with the Church unless, in the immediate future, clear action is taken, including strong moral leadership and the commitment of substantial resources, on behalf of the Spanish-Speaking people.”<sup>65</sup> The increasing visibility of Latinos in the Church, which was itself amplified by their growing numbers, required a more aggressive outreach by the Church toward these communities.

The Encuentro process, which was launched shortly thereafter, marked an important development in the life of the Catholic Church in the United States, and reaffirmed the importance of continually evangelizing Hispanics and the need to construct an infrastructure in the Church and society that would further empower their community. The capstone of this process was the production of the *National Pastoral Plan for Hispanic Ministry* that responded “to the reality and needs of the Hispanic people in their efforts to achieve integration and participation in the life of our Church and in the building of the Kingdom of God.”<sup>66</sup> These developments are all rooted in earlier efforts by Catholic leadership, and include the establishment of the El Paso satellite office, the launch of the Bishops’ Committee for the Spanish Speaking, and its centralization in Washington, DC.

## Conclusion

This essay began by highlighting criticisms of the bishops for their support of immigration reform. Such criticisms are often grounded on the claim that the bishops' support for such reform is grounded on their insecurities related to the health and well-being of the Catholic Church in the United States. Concerned that native-born Catholics were abandoning the faith, Church leaders saw in Latinos a population that could revitalize the Catholic faith in the United States. Their support for policies such as those related to immigration reform were thus based more on self-interest than on a legitimate moral concern for the well-being of Latinos or some principled opposition to immigration law as it currently stands in American life.

It is certainly true that Catholic leadership is deeply concerned about the spiritual health of Latino, and European, Catholic immigrants who arrived in the United States, as much as they are about native-born Catholics. They in fact have been long concerned in this regard; well before there was any sort of demographic crisis in the American Church, Catholic leadership were making efforts – however uneven at various points in time – to provide the support necessary for Spanish-speaking populations here in the United States a place to call home and a church to turn to for support.

## Endnotes

- 1 An *ad limina* visit consists in the obligation of the hierarchy from a given region of the world to visit the Vatican at an appointed time to give an account of the state of their dioceses.
- 2 Pope Benedict XVI, "Address of his Holiness Pope Benedict XVI to the Bishops of the United States," May 18, 2012, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2012/may/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_spe\\_20120518\\_bishops-us-fourteen.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2012/may/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20120518_bishops-us-fourteen.html).
- 3 Comprehensive immigration is broadly understood as legislation that would provide a legalization process for up the eleven million or so unauthorized migrants living in the United States, a more rationalized process for admitting migrants through legal channels, an expansion of detention related mechanisms to deter future illegal immigration, and policies that would help to address the root causes that drive illicit migration (e.g., economic inequality, violence, etc.).
- 4 Brad Miner, "Why the Catholic Bishops are Wrong on Immigration," *The Catholic Thing*, July 29, 2013, <https://www.thecatholicthing.org/2013/07/29/why-the-catholic-bishops-are-wrong-on-immigration/>.
- 5 Anne Mulhern, "Tancredo Slams Pope on Immigration," *The Denver Post*, April 17, 2008; Editorial, "God's Country," *Wall Street Journal* (March 1, 2008), A8.
- 6 Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, *U.S. Religious Landscape Survey* (Washington, DC: Pew Forum, 2008)
- 7 Pew Forum, *Religious Landscape Study*, 2008, 6-8. It is worth noting that the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate critiqued the *Religious Landscape Study*, arguing that it undercounted the number of Latino Catholics living in the United States, failed to mention that although the Catholic Church had the greatest number of losses compared to other groups it still had one of the best retention rates compared to most other religious groups because of its size, and the loss of Catholics has occurred over a long period and not due to some recent exodus. In short, although the Church is still losing members at too high a rate, it was not the crisis that the media coverage has made it out to be when the Pew Study was initially produced. See Mark Gray and Joseph Claude Harris, "A Phantom Crisis," *America* (July 21, 2008), <http://americamagazine.org/issue/662/article/phantom-crisis>



- 8 Pew Forum, 2008, 51.
- 9 Ibid, 8.
- 10 Pew Research Center, 2014
- 11 The preeminent study on the Church’s engagement with Latinos throughout American history is Timothy Matovina *Latino Catholicism: Transformation in America’s Largest Church* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2012).
- 12 Todd Scribner, “Not Because They are Catholic but Because We Are Catholic: The Bishops Engage the Migration Issue in Twentieth Century America,” *Catholic Historical Review* 101, no. 1 (Winter, 2015), 74-99.
- 13 Dudley G. Wooten to John J. Burke, October 29, 1920, Office of the General Secretary (OGS), Box 39, Folder 25, American Catholic History Research Center and University Archives (ACHRCUA).
- 14 Elizabeth Vaughan Dobbins to Father John Burke, C.S.P, “Immigrant Aid Societies at the Ports of Boston and Philadelphia,” November 3, 1920, OGS, Box 39, Folder 25, ACHRCUA.
- 15 Slattery to Burke, June 28, 1921, OGS, Box 29, file 25, ACHRCUA.
- 16 Untitled Report on El Paso Office, November 1922, OGS, Box 39, File 26, ACHRCUA.
- 17 See, for example, Maria Mazzenga and Todd Scribner, “From the Margins to the Center: The U.S. Catholic Bishops, Latinos, and The American Dream in the Twentieth Century,” *The Latino/a American Dream*, Sandra Hanson and John Kenneth White, eds. (College Station, Texas: Texas A&M Press), 2016.
- 18 Caroline Boone to Bruce Mohler, February 11, 1923, Collection 0023, Box 54: Mexican Border Office, Center for Migration Studies Archives (CMS).
- 19 Caroline Boone to Bruce Mohler, March 2, 1923, Collection 0023, Box 54: Mexican Border Office, CMS.
- 20 Bruce Mohler to Bishop Emmanuel Ledvina, July 16, 1923, Collection 0023, Box 54: Mexican Border Office, CMS.
- 21 Bruce Mohler to Caroline Boone, February 19, 1923, Collection 0023, Box 54: Mexican Border Office – General Correspondence, CMS.
- 22 Bruce Mohler to Thomas Mulholland, August 24, 1926, Collection 0023, Box 55: Mexican Border Office: Juarez Office, CMS.
- 23 Cleofas Calleros to Bruce Mohler, August 27, 1926, Collection 023, Box 55: Mexican Border Office: Juarez Office, CMS; Letter from Cleofas Calleros to Bruce Mohler, September 21, 1926, Collection 0023, Box 55: Mexican Border Office: Juarez Office, CMS.
- 24 Katherine Ryan-McIlhlon, “The Anti-Clerical Articles of the Federal Constitution of 1917 and Their Historical Consequences,” *Ave Maria International Law Journal* 1, no. 2 (Spring 2012), 529-535.
- 25 NCWC Administrative Committee, statement on persecution in Mexico, April 15, 1926, OGS, Box 108, File 2, ACHRCUA. A more expansive and comprehensive pastoral letter was issued by the body of bishops later that same year, United States Hierarchy, *Pastoral Letter on Mexico, Pastoral Letters of the United States Catholic Bishops*, Volume 1: 1792 – 1940 (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1984), 337-365.
- 26 Administrative Committee to President Calvin Coolidge, April 15, 1926, OGS, Box 108, File 2, ACHRCUA.
- 27 Julia G. Young. *Mexican Exodus: Emigrants, Exiles and Refugees of the Cristero War* (New York:

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- 28 From 1910 to 1940, the population of San Antonio increased from 97,000 to 254,000 and the proportion of Mexicans living there rose from 31% to 41%. David Badillo, "Between Alienation and Ethnicity: The Evolution of Mexican-American Catholicism in San Antonio, 1910-1940," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 16, no 4 (Summer 1997), 79.
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- 31 Ibid, 21-3.
- 32 Opening Address of Archbishop Robert E. Lucey, Conference on Spanish-Speaking People of the Southwest, San Antonio, Texas, San Antonio, Texas, July 20, 1943, NCWC: General Counsel, Box 35, File: Aliens in Migratory Labor, 1941-1944, ACHRCUA.
- 33 Ibid, 34-8.
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- 40 Report of Archbishop Robert E. Lucey, Meeting of the Bishops' Committee for the Spanish Speaking, November 16, 1960, Collection 10, Box 11, File: Bishops Committee for the Spanish Speaking, 1948 - 1963
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- 49 Archbishop Robert E. Lucey, “Report of the Office of the Bishops’ Committee for the Spanish Speaking to the American Hierarchy: 1967,” July 25, 1967, USCC: Office of the General Secretary, Box 81, File: USCC: Department Committees: Social Development: Spanish Speaking, ACHRCUA. At the time of this report, California, Indiana, Minnesota, Texas, and Wisconsin had established state level Catholic Conferences. Efforts were underway in a number of other states to do the same.
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- 65 Report by Bishop Joseph Bernardin on the Division for the Spanish Speaking, August 3, 1970, USCC: Office of the General Secretary, Box 81, File: USCC: Department Committees: Social Development: Spanish Speaking: 1970, ACHRCUA.
- 66 National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *National Pastoral Plan for Hispanic Ministry* (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1988), 4-5.

# Judge Leander Perez and the Franciscans of Our Lady of Good Harbor: A School Integration Battle in Buras, Louisiana, 1962-1965

By David J. Endres\*

## Introduction

On August 29, 1962, Our Lady of Good Harbor School in Buras, Louisiana became the first integrated Catholic school in the Archdiocese of New Orleans, welcoming five black children into the previously all-white school. Within a week, more than thirty additional New Orleans archdiocesan schools began accepting black students as part of Archbishop Joseph F. Rummel's desegregation plan. While there were fierce anti-integration protests throughout the archdiocese and some parents initially withdrew their children from the desegregated schools, Catholic school desegregation moved forward and enrollments eventually recovered—except at Our Lady of Good Harbor.<sup>1</sup>

In Buras, located sixty miles southeast of New Orleans in Plaquemines Parish, the attempted integration set off a dramatic battle between the priests and sisters who staffed Our Lady of Good Harbor and Judge Leander Perez, a powerful segregationist and political boss who controlled most of the area's economic interests. The Catholics of Buras were split: some defied pro-integration religious leaders while others stood in opposition to Perez and his political allies. The ensuing confrontation brought to the fore not only the issue of race and the morality of segregation, but the interests of religion and politics which battled simultaneously for the fidelity of Buras' Catholics.

## Race and Religion in Buras

The Catholic congregation of Our Lady of Good Harbor was founded in Buras in 1864 and French-speaking diocesan priests served there until 1925 when Franciscans from the Province of St. John the Baptist, Cincinnati, arrived. Upon their arrival the Franciscan friars found a small congregation of less than 200 families with no school or parish organizations. Within a few years, the friars built up parish societies and sodalities and emphasized the education of the young. "If religion is to be fostered here, we must start with the children . . . The older folks know very little about their religion," remarked Father Martin Hoeft,

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OFM, pastor of the Buras congregation from 1926-1939.<sup>2</sup> The friars began offering children catechetical instruction twice a week, though as of yet had not established a Catholic school in the community. With assistance from lay catechists and members of the women's religious community known as the Missionary Servants of the Most Holy Eucharist, catechetical stations were established in Buras and adjacent areas.

Buras' racial and ethnic divide frustrated the Franciscans' ministry. The population included whites – often of French or Croatian ancestry who accounted for two-thirds of the population – and “persons of color,” both African Americans and those of mixed racial ancestry, referred to as “mulattos” by the Franciscans of Buras, collectively composing one-third of Buras' population.<sup>3</sup> The town and the surrounding region were generally segregated according to these three racial groups: whites, mixed, and blacks. As Father Francis X. Hoffer, OFM, reported, “We have three classes of people, the white, the dark, and the dark-dark; and each of these three classes soulfully hates the other.” The perceived need for separation extended to worship: the middle aisle was reserved for the whites, one side aisle for the racially mixed, and another for the blacks.<sup>4</sup> The Franciscans noted that segregation hindered congregational unity:

These color lines play great havoc for religion . . . They form an almost insurmountable obstacle in the way of converting the people from nominal Catholicism to practical Catholicism. The whites will not go to church because the “whitened” Mulattoes rent pews on the white side . . . The real Mulattoes do not go to church on account of their more fortunate “white” brethren who occupy white pews . . . The brown-skins of course refuse to sit with the blacks.<sup>5</sup>

While Our Lady of Good Harbor was never a segregated church, black and racially mixed congregants worshipping in Buras likely faced various forms of discrimination such as approaching the communion rail last after the whites had received.

When the Franciscans recognized that formal educational opportunities for black children were few, the church began sponsoring a school for “colored” children in Buras. Labelled a “nigger-lover” for his efforts, the pastor, Father Martin Hoeft, OFM, persevered, but the school closed under one of Hoeft's successors. The school (later called “school no. 1”) reopened in 1949 with Missionary Servants of the Most Holy Eucharist, Franciscan friars, and lay women serving as teachers.<sup>6</sup> By this time, the friars made plans for a segregated parochial school for white children. In 1955, a school for whites (called “school no. 2”) opened under the direction of the Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration from Mishawaka, Indiana, who also began to staff “school no. 1.” The schools grew quickly from a combined 174 students in 1956 to over 400 by 1962.<sup>7</sup>

### **The Battle for Integration: The Priest and the Politician**

Our Lady of Good Harbor became embroiled in the fight for racial integration when Archbishop Rummel mandated integration of the parochial schools in his archdiocese beginning with the 1962-1963 school year. He had attempted to enforce integration in the churches of the New Orleans archdiocese almost ten years earlier, but he approached school desegregation more cautiously.<sup>8</sup> The most vocal opposition came from Judge Leander Perez, district attorney in Plaquemines Parish. Perez, a Catholic, was the most powerful political

boss in the Louisiana Delta. Over several decades, Perez had at his disposal tens of millions of dollars in oil royalties and almost single-handedly controlled the politics of Plaquemines Parish, bribing white voters to support him and his allies and effectively disenfranchising African Americans. Consequently, Perez-backed candidates sailed to victory, often with more than ninety percent of the vote.<sup>9</sup> His control of Plaquemines Parish was so complete that he was compared to Communist Party leader Nikita Khrushchev: "Mr. Perez has established a tighter dynasty and has a better setup than Mr. Khrushchev has," said a Perez political opponent.<sup>10</sup>

A virulent racist, Perez supported segregation, worked against civil rights for blacks and publically used derogatory names like "burr head" and "pickaninny" to describe non-whites. "Do you know what the Negro is?" he once asked. "Animals right out of the jungle. Passion. Welfare. Easy life. That's the Negro."<sup>11</sup> Perez ran afoul of the church hierarchy long before the Catholic school integration controversy reached its climax. Father Francis X. Hoffer, a Franciscan serving in Buras in the mid-1950s lamented Perez's control over the people: "We have self-styled 'excellent Catholics' who are the most anti-clerical people I've ever met. They openly ridicule the Archbishop, and they are ready and willing to sell their soul to a political boss [Leander Perez] who has almost every family (directly or indirectly) on his payroll."<sup>12</sup>

The Franciscans recognized the undue influence Perez had in Plaquemines Parish and sought to undermine him, but Perez clearly had the upper hand with sufficient money and clout to assure loyalty. When the Buras congregation had in the early 1950s investigated opening a school for white children, Perez offered to secure a building "for a nominal sum," but on condition that the school never be used for black students. The pastor, Miles Pfalzer, OFM, in a letter to his superior noted that he could not make such a promise: "Of course, I would never sign anything like that, nor would the Archbishop permit me."<sup>13</sup> The congregation secured a second building, but without Perez's help.

Father Christopher Schneider, OFM, arrived in Buras as pastor in 1962 and quickly became involved in the school integration battle which pitted him against Perez. The confrontation became the subject of a CBS News documentary, "The Priest and the Politician," which aired nationwide on September 18, 1963 and was narrated by the young reporter Dan Rather. Rather, then chief of the CBS Southern bureau, framed the integration fight in Buras as a "contest between good and evil." "Neither side is likely to deny it," Rather continued, for "each denounces the other as evil; each sees himself on God's side."<sup>14</sup> While Buras' sisters and friars were united in their support for school integration, not all of the town's residents were sympathetic, setting off the confrontation that garnered national attention.<sup>15</sup>

On March 27, 1962, Archbishop Rummel announced the integration of the New Orleans parochial school system. When Perez learned of the desegregation plans in Buras, he urged parents: "On the opening day of school . . . watch the four or five little Negroes being paraded into your schools – the schools built with your contributions. Then take your children out of school. Then don't pay them a dime."<sup>16</sup> Perez was vocal in his opposition to the archbishop, stating publically that "the archbishop has earned the punishment of hell for selling out on his people."<sup>17</sup> He was equally critical of Father Schneider, calling him a "sniveling coward" for agreeing to the archbishop's plan. Rummel responded by excommunicating Perez along with two other obstinate segregationists on April 16, 1962. A defiant Perez quipped, "If they think they can send me to hell, I beat them to it and I told them to go to hell" and joked he would found his own church called the "Perez-byterians." He continued to call himself a Catholic after his excommunication, but not an "Archbishop's Catholic."<sup>18</sup>

Before the 1962-1963 school year commenced, the majority of white parents who had enrolled their children at Our Lady of Good Harbor the previous year withdrew them – either because they wanted their children in the all-white public schools (Plaquemines public schools were not desegregated until 1966) or feared reprisal from Perez and his powerful segregationist allies. Perez – though denying involvement in any intimidation attempts – argued that the decline in student attendance was due to the former, while the Franciscans argued it was mostly because of the latter.

Certainly intimidation and fear played a role in the school's enrollment decline. Before the first day of class, the school received a bomb threat and its bus was drained of brake fluid. Families (both black and white) sending their children to the school were also targeted. A few went to the media with their experiences of intimidation and threats of violence made against them, but many undoubtedly did not. One African American family who had enrolled their children in the integrated school spoke to the media, but only after leaving Plaquemines Parish and Perez's reach. Marcus Prout, the father of two black children enrolled in the integrated school, was threatened with having his job eliminated. According to Prout, Perez directly threatened his employer. "I don't know what you did," Prout's employer informed him, "but Judge Perez told me I have to get rid of you or he'll get rid of me. And I have to stick with the people with the money." The night before school opened, the Prouts received an early morning phone call threatening to set fire to their home and "every other nigger" in Buras. A resolute Prout decided to send his children to the integrated "school no. 2" anyway.<sup>19</sup>

While the Prouts were unmoved, the segregationists' threats against families who planned to send their children to the newly-integrated school were effective. By the opening day of school there were only thirty-eight white children enrolled alongside five black students – a drastic decrease from the 340 white children enrolled the previous year. Outside of Buras, attendance at the other integrated Catholic schools matched more than ninety percent of the previous year during the first week and eventually rose to ninety-seven percent, indicating that overwhelmingly parents enrolled their children despite desegregation.<sup>20</sup>

But the situation in Buras was different. Those supporting segregation were unrelenting in their attempts to intimidate priests, teaching sisters, and school parents through violence and economic retaliation. Facing an angry mob of picketers, the few students attending the first day of class received no protection from state or local authorities. Instead, the local government, with Perez as the visible leader, helped organize the demonstration. Local authorities provided folding chairs, umbrellas, and water for the dozens of segregationists who kept vigil at the school. By the second day of school, only twenty-six white children arrived at the school—no black students were in attendance. Father Schneider decided against holding classes because of threats of violence and inadequate security. Harold Mitchell, the father of a white child in the integrated school, withdrew his child after the second day and then promptly moved out of Plaquemines Parish. He was told that the company he worked for (employing 500 men) would be closed unless he "step[ped] out of this school situation." Asked by a reporter who was responsible for the threat, Mitchell replied, "There's only one man it could have been and that's Leander Perez."<sup>21</sup> Later that week, the friars and sisters were threatened with being "tarred and feathered" and were greeted the next morning with the contents of a feather mattress littering the schoolyard. As further retribution against the school, Perez suppressed all government funding for Our Lady of Good Harbor. No longer would students receive textbooks, access to busing, or even reduced-priced milk.<sup>22</sup>





*Christopher Schneider, OFM, aids school children passing through the picket line to attend the desegregated Our Lady of Good Harbor School, Buras, Louisiana, August 30, 1962 (Courtesy of the Associated Press).*



*Malachi Brogan, OFM, and Christopher Schneider, OFM, in front of Our Lady of Good Harbor Catholic School in Buras, Louisiana, on August 31, 1962. The school yard was littered with feathers to serve as a warning that the Franciscans would be "tarred and feathered" if they resisted the anti-integrationists (Courtesy of the Associated Press).*



*Christopher Schneider, OFM, pastor of Our Lady of Good Harbor Church in Buras, Louisiana raised the flag in front of the church's school each morning during the 1962-1963 school year. The school was open, but did not have a single student because of the dispute over integration. The school was closed at the end of the year and was never reopened. (Courtesy of The Archives of the Franciscan Province of St. John the Baptist of Cincinnati).*



*Sister M. Ann Bernadette Hoernig, OSF, with students at Our Lady of Good Harbor School, Buras, Louisiana. Sister Ann Bernadette received a bomb threat on August 27, 1963. The next day the school was damaged, presumably by anti-integrationists (Courtesy of the Archives of the Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration, Mishawaka, Indiana).*



*Christopher Schneider, OFM, surveying the damage to Our Lady of Good Harbor School, Buras, Louisiana, August 28, 1963. The school would not be reopened (Courtesy of the Associated Press).*

Whether due to prejudice or fear, families refused to send their children to the integrated school. By September 10, 1962, all the children regardless of race had withdrawn. For the rest of the year, the friars and sisters opened the school each morning, but it was merely symbolic, for no students attended. Yet segregation supporters were not satisfied. In the ensuing days and months, other sinister acts followed. On at least two separate occasions, gunfire sprayed the friars' home.<sup>23</sup>

While protestors kept vigil at the school for many weeks and intimidation and threats against the Franciscan clergy and sisters continued, the supporters of an integrated Our Lady of Good Harbor were resilient and planned to reopen the school for the 1963-1964 academic year. In the summer months of 1963, rumors of violence against the school's supporters circulated throughout Buras. Sister M. Ann Bernadette Hoernig, OSF, a teacher assigned to the school, received an ominous warning via telephone the week before the school was to open: "If you take those Negroes into our new white school it will be blown to pieces with you in it."<sup>24</sup>

The next day, August 28, around midnight, someone climbed to the roof of Our Lady of Good Harbor, poured fifteen gallons of gasoline down a vent and ignited it using a fuse. The ensuing blast blew out a wall and several windows of the school, but no injuries resulted from the blast.<sup>25</sup>

Coadjutor Archbishop John Cody, who would later succeed Rummel, called the bombing a "cowardly and vicious attack," and ordered the school closed to "protect the lives of the priests, sisters, and children." Perez, who continued to deny responsibility for any acts of intimidation, including the blast, was unsurprisingly sympathetic to the vandals. When asked about the damage, Perez stated: "I do not decry the activities of our people in resisting or objecting in any way they can to the unlawful, un-Christian, unmoral actions of the hierarchy of their local priests to deprive them of their property, to deprive their children of a private education to which they planned and to which they paid." When Dan Rather questioned Perez after the blast, he stated, "You are not going to pin any responsibility directly or indirectly upon me for any overt act which is improper. . . [but] violence in certain cases is absolutely justified."<sup>26</sup>

After the blast, Father Schneider stated he was sure Our Lady of Good Harbor would reopen; it was only a matter of time. Though the archdiocese worked to repair the school, it was announced that Our Lady of Good Harbor's reopening would be delayed until October 14, 1963.

However, local authorities refused to grant the necessary permits to reoccupy the building even after repairs were made. As a result, "school no. 2" never reopened. With no hope of reopening, the two remaining Franciscan sisters were withdrawn from Buras in June 1965.<sup>27</sup>

## Conclusion

In the battle between the segregationist politician and the pro-integration religious of Buras, we may judge that Leander Perez won as the integrated Our Lady of Good Harbor was permanently closed. Even so, the Catholic Church's support of the Civil Rights Movement, the progress of Catholic school integration, and the religious concern for social justice indicated that while the politician may have won the battle, Father Schneider and his supporters won the war. By the late 1960s, the excommunicated Perez realized the social tide was shifting despite his attempts to quell racial integration. In fact, his segregationist stance ultimately gave way

to his religious convictions. After making a “conciliatory speech,” Perez was reconciled to the Catholic Church one year before his death in 1969.<sup>28</sup> In an ironic conclusion to this battle over desegregation, Perez, as his health deteriorated, called on a Franciscan to provide him with the last sacraments – a further testimony to the spiritual leadership of the Franciscans who labored in the Louisiana Delta and the impact of Franciscan friars and sisters in the much-contested struggle for Catholic school desegregation in the Deep South.<sup>29</sup>

### Endnotes

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- 8 For the evolution of the Archdiocese of New Orleans’ approach to race and segregation see R. Bentley Anderson, *Black, White, and Catholic: New Orleans Interracialism, 1947-1956* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2005), especially 113-115, 123-129, 142-145, 150-153.
- 9 Grant, “Archbishop Joseph F. Rummel and the 1962 New Orleans Desegregation Crisis,” 59-66; Glen Jeansonne, *Leander Perez: Boss of the Delta* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977), 266, 362.
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- 13 Miles Pfalzer, OFM to Vincent Kroger, OFM, Provincial, January 3, 1953, box PLA.014 “Bu-

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  - 23 "Shots Damage Buras Rectory," (New Orleans) *Times-Picayune*, July 7, 1963.
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  - 26 CBS News Reports, "The Priest and the Politician," September 18, 1963.
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  - 28 "Absolution for Perez Described," *Baton Rouge State-Times*, March 28, 1969.
  - 29 Ann Bernadette Hoernig, OSF, Mishawaka, Indiana, interview with the author, May 1, 2013. Sister Ann Bernadette remembered the friar who ministered to Perez was stationed in Port Sulphur, Louisiana, but was unsure of his name.

# **“The Most Extraordinary Ordinary Person”<sup>1</sup> Charlene Richard, the Little Cajun Saint, and the Gift of Redemptive Suffering**

By Nancy Autin\*

For those living in Lafayette Parish and surrounding areas, the name Charlene Richard is likely a familiar one. In the years since her death from acute lymphatic leukemia in August 1959, believers in the young girl’s intercessory power have multiplied. Many of these, including the hospital chaplain who ministered to the 12-year old in her final days, have prayed and lobbied for her canonization. In promoting their cause, believers attribute numerous miracles and answered prayers, including remission of cancers, survival of premature infants, and conversions of lapsed Catholics among others, to the prayers of Charlene Richard.<sup>2</sup>

To some residents of Charlene’s small rural home town of Richard, Louisiana, however, devotion to the young girl (as she is remembered) is somewhat mystifying. In their eyes, she was the typical child of a small Catholic town: pious and virtuous, but not in the extreme. The second of ten children born to Mary Alice and Joseph Richard, she was simply known as a very active, imaginative, and spirited preadolescent who enjoyed school, music, family, friends, sports, and outdoors. Indeed, even Charlene’s parents struggled with the portrayal of their daughter as a saint.<sup>3</sup> Of course, Catholic tradition is filled with stories of local communities grappling with the sainthood of one of their own. Nevertheless, the ongoing effort to have Charlene Richard, described by her brother John Dale Richard as “the most extraordinary ordinary person,” declared a saint reveals the power of belief in redemptive suffering.

Nearly sixty years have gone by since the young girl’s death. The legacy of Charlene Marie Richard, rich with accounts of favors and presumed miracles, is best credited to two priests. One knew and ministered to her in the last 16 days of her short earthly life; the other bonded with her after death and continues to experience her presence 57 years later. The story of Charlene’s diagnosis and how she offered up her sufferings for others in need, remain shrouded in a mystical aura poignantly described by Fr. Joseph Brennan. Fr. Brennan, now in his middle 80s, was chaplain of Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital in Lafayette, Louisiana, at the time of Charlene’s death.<sup>4</sup> Fr. Brennan was a young priest, ordained only three months, when asked to go to the hospital to tell a young girl that she was dying. He remembers anxiously thinking, “I did not know what I was going to tell her.”<sup>5</sup>

Having never met Charlene in life, the circumstances of coming to know her resulted in a profound and permanent devotion to the young girl by Fr. Floyd Calais. He humbly shares his life-changing experience after being introduced to the now acclaimed saintly youth. Fr. Calais’ own challenges and those of others, some whom he knew, others he did not, are

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believed to be resolved through the intercession of the young lady whose hometown bears her family name.

Both priests are now retired. As devotees of Charlene prepare to celebrate the 57<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of her death in her hometown of Richard, Louisiana, both Fr. Brennan and Fr. Calais share their experiences in separate interviews. The interviews are reported here without interruption or editing by a narrator’s commentary. Fr. Brennan’s remarks evoke a mixture of pain and suffering; his testimony is reflective, heart-warming, soul-searching and inspiring. Fr. Calais’s testimony is deeply personal; in all its simplicity, the meaning is far-reaching and profound. His story is packed with uncommon remarks that demonstrate courage, tenacity, humor, and grace: all of which he attributes to answers to his prayers to Charlene.

### **Fr. Joseph Brennan’s first-hand account – My Name is Charlene<sup>6</sup>**

Some of the greatest things in our life come by accident. I met Charlene by accident. We were four priests at Fatima and I was assigned as chaplain to Lourdes. I was called, would you come to talk to some people that Dr. Voorhies is speaking with; they have a sick daughter; that’s all I knew.

I went over to Lourdes and Sr. Frances was there. She took me to the floor where the doctor was meeting with Charlene’s mom and dad. I heard the description that it was at stage 4; she was misdiagnosed...they didn’t first diagnose cancer. So, I listened and all of a sudden they turned to me and said, ‘Fr. Brennan, would you go up and tell our daughter?’ I thought, my soul. I’m three months ordained; I just didn’t know what I was going to say.

So I went up on the elevator to her room, room 411. I opened the door to the room. As soon as I saw her she said, ‘My name is Charlene.’ And I said, ‘Charlene, you know you are a sick little girl. In a couple of weeks you know a beautiful lady is coming to take you home.’ Charlene looked at me and said, ‘When the lady comes I will tell her Fr. Brennan said hello.’ Her comments wiped me out. From that day, she became an obsession. I would go every day even though it wasn’t my turn to visit the sick. We became very close. She was precocious; very mature for so young. Each day I could tell by her hands; I couldn’t touch them too much because of leukemia. Finally, One day, she said, ‘Lean over, I want to kiss you goodbye; I will be praying for you in heaven. Tomorrow I won’t be able to talk so let me say good-bye now.’ Again, I was wiped out. I wondered, is the whole world this way?

We parted. The next day when I arrived in the evening after a busy day, I went up to room 411. Dr. Voorhies was closing her eyes. She had gone home. There was a mystical feeling in that room. You had to know that something was special in that room.

### **A Little Intercessor**

Charlene has been for me and for Louisiana a little intercessor. For her 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we had an outside Mass. A lot of people never got down the road; they never made it up to the church. I recall there were over 3000 people. Every news-

paper, TV folks, and reporters were there. It was packed. That was the moment to do something. I said here is the homerun we need to bring about canonization. It didn't happen yet. I figure Charlene wants me to be up there with her when it happens.

### **It's for Real**

Why pray to Charlene? The answers—they were tremendous—for little things; for big things. The granite cemetery was an answer to a request. Ten thousand people a year come from different places. When I would do book signings, I would ask, Where are you from? Eunice, Baton Rouge, New York City, Philadelphia, Boston—from all over the country. People believe; they see it's for real.

In the beginning stages, I didn't want to share, selfish, personal, my little saint. As time went on I started to share—with TV broadcasts from all over the South; she was on CBS, FOX network—all these documents are at the library at UL university (University of Louisiana at Lafayette).

Things started happening shortly after her death. It was several years after her death. It happened gradually. Fr. Calais, my good friend, was stationed in Richard where Charlene is buried. That's when the prayer intercession started and people were receiving their requests. Someone said, 'I knew Charlene; she wasn't that great.' I said, none of us is great 'til crisis comes. Charlene never gave a talk, never wrote a book; yet she has influenced so many people. There is a mystic in Richard around the gravesite almost waiting to burst open. We should not take anyone's life for granted; there is a purpose no matter how young, how old.

There is an aura about Charlene that goes beyond religion. Those who have received favors run the whole gauntlet of society—the rich and the poor alike. She comes at a time where Acadiana needs something else besides crawfish; she is the little Cajun saint.

### **Today I am invigorated**

I am very close to the UL softball team. They have great devotion to Charlene. They go to Richard to venerate her grave. Charlene is a message of hope and simplicity to them and to all of us; it's not complicated. It all happened—she has sure come to me several times. Others talk about the miracles. Some have written about it.

About a year ago I was right at the door of going; I was ready to go. My bags were packed. She said, 'No, put your hands in His hands.' And I did. She then said, 'I am here with you.' I pray to her all the time. She was in the hospital for 16 days. We had each other every day; sometimes a little time; sometimes more. Today I am invigorated.



## Fr. Floyd Calais – My Closest Neighbor<sup>7</sup>

I will do anything for Charlene Richard. I never met her. She died in 1959. I learned about Charlene Richard through Fr. Brennan. He was assistant pastor at Fatima and chaplain at Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital. Every night Fr. Brennan and I would meet and get a root beer and we'd talk about what we did that day. He would always talk about Charlene.

In 1961, I was chaplain at the old Charity Hospital. I did NOT like the job. I was made by God to be a parish priest. So, I said, Charlene, when you were alive you helped a lot of people. Now you are with God. I'm asking for help. I had no idea where she was from. I said, please ask God to inspire my bishop to give me a parish. I made that request around April of '61. About two to three weeks later, I get a letter from Bishop Schexnayder appointing me to St. Edward Church in Richard. It meant nothing to me.

So I called Fr. Brennan. I said, 'I have good news and bad news.' Fr. Brennan asked, 'What's the good news?' I told him I have a parish. He then asked, 'What's the bad news?' I said, 'I don't know where it is.' He said, 'Let's go look for it.' When we found it, rang the doorbell, Charlene's pastor opened the door. He had visited her in the hospital so he had met Fr. Brennan; ignoring me he said, 'Fr. Brennan, would you like to see where Charlene is buried?' I said, 'She's buried here?' He then went on to say, 'she will be your closest neighbor.' At the time, her grave was the closest one to the rectory. I went straight to the grave.

Now the second paragraph of that letter (Bishop Schexnayder's letter) said, 'They need a new church. I've pledged \$5,000.' I'm all excited, I'll be building a new church until I counted the collection, my first Mass there--\$78.75. So I remember thinking, there's not enough here to build a church; but, will they be able to feed the pastor? So, I went to see my parents. My wise mother said, 'Flo, if God wants a church there, don't block it; if he doesn't, it's none of your business.' Then I started giving missions, retreats and days of recollection. I always gave a talk on confirmation and I'd tell Charlene stories—she was confirmed not too long before she died. After that I started seeing cars drive up to the church; I started getting letters in the mail with money in them for the church in thanksgiving for the favors granted through Charlene.

### Material Answers

I started thinking, I can type and compose, so I can write to people who I will never see on this side of the grave, one of whom was Floyd Patterson, the former heavy weight champion of the world. He had just become a Catholic. Now, here is the miracle in itself. How am I going to get his address? I know if anybody else were to try this it wouldn't work. I wrote to *Sports Illustrated*. They gave me his address. Three months went by. Then one day I get a letter from Floyd Patterson:

*Dear Father,*

*I'm so sorry that I didn't respond, I've been in Europe for the past three months. As you can imagine, when I got home I had a ton of letters. But yours touched me.*

Here's what happened. I told him my name was also Floyd. I'm in the Deep South and trying to teach the people about racism but I need a building in which to teach them. So I'm asking for help. Inside the letter was a check. So, I started writing to other people and the checks started coming in.

The main thing is this. There was a builder named Roy Dupuis that I knew when I was at Cathedral. He called me one day and said, 'I understand you are trying to build a church in Richard.' I said, 'You used the right verb, I am *trying*.' He asked if I had the plans; I said, 'No, but I have an architect.' He then told me, 'When you have the plans, let me look at them. Here's what I'm going to do for you. We'll write down everything that needs to go into that church. Whatever it costs me, that's what I will charge you.' We built the church for \$78,000. That was in 1962. It was a big deal. What I thought was going to be 10 years away, two and a half years later, on Thanksgiving night, and my birthday, I said the first Mass in that church.

When giving my talk on Charlene, I would tell the people, priests are just like women. They are never satisfied. You give them one thing; they want something else. You give them a refrigerator, they need a washing machine. So I said, I have a church, now I need an organ. It took three people to play the organ, two people to hold it together and one to play. So, I started an organ fund. Herbert Abdalla gave me \$300. Another man gave me \$300. An old lady in Eunice said I'll give you 300. I called Baldwin Organ Company in Alexandria, Louisiana, and told them I needed a new organ, would they send me a salesman. The best salesman I ever met in my 66 years of priesthood is the one they sent, a black Baptist. I saw what would fulfill our needs in his catalog but it was \$2464.64. I told him this is what we need, but we can't afford that price. Here is why I say he is the best salesman I ever met. He said, Father, one thing I never understood about Catholic priests. They have no faith. I said, "Order it."

Another lady promised me \$300. She was going to Europe. She left on Friday, July 10 of that year, 1962. She called me. I went to the grave. I said "Charlene, do not let Mrs. Ledoux go to Europe without giving me that \$300. She's an old Cajun gal, she's going to spend \$2000, come back, and think she's a pauper. So, she called me the Wednesday before she left. She wanted to have lunch with me. You know, I was going to kill the fatted calf. She said, 'you know I'm pretty busy.' I said, 'Yes ma'am, I understand that.' She continued, 'But I made you a promise, I want to fulfill it. You have a blank check? I had blank checks of every bank in the area. I said, which bank? 'St. Landry Bank and Trust.' She said, 'You write it out and I'll sign it.' I asked, "How much?" She showed me two fingers. I'm thinking, hmmm, we're losing a hundred. I'll be positive, so I said, '\$200?' 'You know Father, God's been really good to me, make it \$2000.' So, the organ was paid for. This happened through the prayers to Charlene.

## Healing Answers

These are material things I've been talking about. I want to talk about healing. I was pastor of Holy Cross Church for about six years. One afternoon, my doorbell rang. A man was crying; he couldn't control himself. They had just found out that his 3-year old grandchild had a malignant tumor in the abdomen, inoperable at the time. He said, 'Will you come talk to my daughter, the mother of my child?' What do you do? You hug them; that's what they remember. They remember the warmth of the hugging. They sought the best medical help. They were told, let's try chemo, let's try to reduce it. After many rounds of chemo, it had shrunk; so they decided to operate on a Wednesday. They told me this after 11 o'clock the Sunday before the surgery. I said, 'Let's go to Charlene's grave tomorrow.' I held the child in my arms. I said, 'Charlene, this child is really suffering. You know what you went through; you know what your mom and dad went through. Her mom and dad are really suffering. You're with God, you're powerful. Ask for help.'

They opened her up on Wednesday. There was absolutely nothing. Nothing. I went to visit with her about two months ago. She is now married, college graduate, two children--picture of health. I remember that I gave a mission in Lafayette here at St. Leo Church. I talked about Charlene. The people did not know I had that little girl in the pew. I told her story. I said, it's possible that some of you don't believe me. So I said, honey come up her. I hugged her. She's beautiful.

Recently, three or four months ago, a young man came to see me; his girlfriend's mother had three tumors on her lung. They were going to MD Anderson in Houston. She already gone there, been diagnosed, and was going back to see what was happening. I said, let's go to Richard. We went on a Sunday. Their appointment was Monday, the next day. The MRI was over, the doctor came out and said, 'What have you been doing?' She said, 'What do you mean?' The doctor said, 'You have no tumors. They are gone.'

## Another Cure

When I was at Cathedral, I taught seniors once a week. One of them was Rocky Roy. He wrote his story and someone picked it up from the grave. I'm sure when he received his diploma from the bishop at graduation, when he walked out of church that night, he never went back. He laughed at people who went. He had an 18-year-old daughter later on in life, colon cancer, stage 4. She asked her daddy to take her to Charlene's grave. He said, No that isn't going to help. She begged, please daddy. So, ok they went. Came home no change, getting worse. She asked to go again, please daddy. So they went. It looked like she was going to die along the way. Her daddy said, 'we are turning back.' She said, 'No, daddy, please.' So they went. When they got there, she prayed then she traced each of the letters on the grave, Charlene Marie Richard. When she got up, she said, 'Daddy I'm healed. Her daddy asked, 'What?' She looked like death warmed over. They came back home, she started getting better and better and better. When the oncologist examined her, he said, 'I'm happy to give you this news: your child has no trace of cancer.' So, this

girl has run many marathons. She ran the Boston Marathon a few years ago. When the bomb went off in Boston, she had just crossed the line. She has four children. She visits Fr. Brennan frequently.

### **Gravesite Veneration**

I went there to Richard in June 1961. No one had heard any of the stories. I didn't think emotionally that I could have done it at the time. So it took me about three or four months. Then I said, I need to tell you, the people of Richard, how you got me here. So I told the story. Also by going around giving days of recollection, spreading the news, I told them about it. I've never been there when someone is not at the grave. I've anointed people right at the grave. Bishop Schexnayder who sent me there told me 'I go there more than people know. I will pray at her grave.'

For the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her death, we had an anniversary Mass. Every year we have a Mass in the evening, the Friday before the anniversary of her death, August 11. This particular year, Bishop Flynn said the Mass. We thought maybe 500 people would be there; we estimated 5000 were there. Cars were parked as far as you could see. Fr. Brennan gave a beautiful homily.

I meet people there from all over. I left Richard in 1968; only one time did I go back to say Mass. I went to take the place of the pastor who was from Richmond VA. He was going on vacation. It was a Saturday afternoon. A lot of people were at the grave. A man was there from San Antonio, Texas. He said, 'I'm here to write the story of Charlene Richard. I'm not Catholic but I heard so much about her and want to know more. I've interviewed all the names I've had except one. I'm going to go to Lafayette to see him.' I said, which one is that? 'A Fr. Floyd Calais.' I said, 'what if I tell you, you don't have to go to Lafayette.' He said, 'what do you mean?' I said, 'you're talking to him.'

### **Contemplation and Conversions**

There are two families in Richard; two brothers, the last name is Magee. Both raised families of geniuses. One was Catholic, the other was not. In fact, he was far more anti Catholic. Recently, I was eating at Chris' Poboy. A man was sitting with his back to me but he said he recognized my voice. He came to me and said, 'You're Fr. Calais. My brother is married to Carla Magee.' I said, 'You're joking. Where are they?' They own a business and are located on Ponce de Mouton Road. Carla was my organist when I was in Richard.

So, I went there. She was at lunch. I was sitting in the office. I had not seen her in a long time. When she walked in she said, 'I cannot believe this. What a coincidence you should be here today. Last Thursday night my daddy became a Catholic.' I said, 'Honey, I've prayed so much for your daddy, I'm coming to see him.' Two days later I drove to Richard. He's got macular degeneration in both eyes. He opened the door

and said, ‘I can’t see you but you must be a good man if you’re here.’ I said, ‘Ray, I came to congratulate you. I prayed so hard for you.’ He hugged me and said, ‘I’m so happy. I think Charlene had something to do with all this.’

Charlene’s brother, John Dale lives next to the house where Charlene grew up. He is married to Loretta LeJeune. She was a wonderful lady who taught catechism for me. One day after graduation, she came to me with a guy from Lawtell. They wanted to make arrangements to be married. I could tell that’s not her match. When I had her alone, I said, ‘This is not the guy you should marry. That’s not your style.’ She said, ‘I love him.’ All the books I read in the seminary and all books since, do not explain how to handle that. When somebody says I love him, what’s the argument? You can’t argue about that. But I had one argument. When they left, I went to the grave. I said, ‘Charlene, you went to school with Loretta, you can’t let that happen to your friend.’ Two weeks later, Loretta comes to see me. ‘Father, I changed my mind. I listened to you; my mom and dad agreed that’s not the guy for me.’ Within a year, I did her wedding to Charlene Richard’s brother, John Dale. There are so many stories. Charlene, took care of it.

### **Fighting Racism**

Charlene has always helped me give the right answers to people. When building the church, I had a building committee. I had three questions: Do we really need a church? ‘Yes, Father.’ Do we want one? ‘Yes, Father.’ Will we pay for it? ‘Yes, Father. We’ll work hard.’ Ok. Do you have any questions? ‘Yes, Father. Will we have a special place for the blacks?’ Now, I’m facing them. Let me say this to you. They are no better than we are. Why should we have a special place in church? I never heard a thing after that. Charlene gave me the words. I believe that.

Then I had a mission, St. Thomas in Savoie, about 7 miles from there. There is a cemetery there with one black man buried there. They wanted to exhume the body. But I know the Cajun mentality—always a favor. ‘Father, we know that family would love to have the body transferred to the cemetery in Mallet. We’ll pay for whatever it costs.’ I said, Well, okay. You know there are very, very strict rules about exhuming and moving a body. We have to be sure that is the one. They asked, ‘How will we know it’s the right one?’ I said, ‘Does that answer your question?’ Charlene gave me the words. I believe that.

Another story—the first Sunday I said Mass there, none of the blacks came up to receive communion. The following Sunday, I was driving to Richard. I saw an older black man was walking; maybe he is going to Church, so I offered him a ride. I said, ‘Why didn’t ya’ll go to communion?’ He said, ‘They want to go first, the whites.’ I said, ‘Listen, they have a new boss there now. It’s me. I give the orders. Ya’ll come up. I’ll give you communion.’ They didn’t do it. By the third or fourth Sunday, two or three came up. So, I said to Samuel Thomas, ‘Sam, let me tell you something. Ya’ll come up. I’m going to stand there til ya’ll come up. Whatever they say, I’ll take care of it.’ So they starting coming up.

After two or three weeks, a guy came up. He said, 'Father we're going to have a meeting after Mass.' I had weekday Mass on Thursday nights at 7. I said, 'Who called the meeting?' Somebody had to call the meeting. He said, 'Oh, it's nothing big. We just want to get together.' I continued, you know when they were all emotionally disturbed, everybody was coming to the meeting. Once they thought about it, three men showed up. So I said, the meeting was scheduled for 7:30. It's almost 8 o'clock. One man said, 'I can't understand. They said they were coming. Maybe something happened, I don't know what.' I said, 'I need to go.' The men said, 'Father you gave out communion to the blacks. Usually, we go first.' I said, 'It's not *usually* anymore. You have a different priest. I believe God created every human being. They are not lesser than we are.' That was the end of that. It was Charlene who gave me the words.

When I got to Abbeville, the black church, Our Lady of Lourdes, burned on New Year's Day, 1971. I said to Msgr. Martin, pastor of the other church, 'Let's prove to the world we're Christian. Let's go convince the Bishop we don't need to rebuild the black church. Let's absorb it. Wherever the line is drawn, they will go to the church on that side.' The bishop said, 'We're going to lose some people.' I said, 'Bishop, if we lose them, we never had them. Some of the black Protestants will see this happening and say, "This is Christian."' That is exactly what happened. Now 30 plus years later, they are hugging each other, choirs are signing; they've got it. We integrated the churches.

At my Mom's wake in Breaux Bridge, two black guys came from Abbeville to the funeral home. The spokesman said, 'You know Father, we want you to know why we're here. It is our way of saying thank you for restoring our dignity.' I'll never, never forget that.

I learned so much from Charlene. I pray to her every day. I go to her grave every chance I get. She's been there for me so many times and in so many ways. She answered my prayers and gave me words when I needed them most. In this day and age, the suffering is not primarily physical. There's a lot of spiritual sickness. Young people need a model. A Cajun saint, imagine how people would talk about this? It's needed. Nothing comes easy; canonizing someone doesn't come easy (unless it's Mother Teresa).

Several decades have passed since Fr. Brennan conveyed in 1989 to the Lafayette local newspaper his sentiments: "What made this young girl great is the way she faced death. There are many books teaching us how to live. She wrote a book, by her life, on how to die."<sup>8</sup> Since her death, however, the story of Charlene Richard is well documented by Barbara Gutierrez, former managing editor for 19 years of the Lafayette Diocese official newspaper, *The Morning Star*. In the 1970s, she wrote a five-part series for the Catholic paper that captured so much attention that additional staff were employed just to copy the articles and get them in the mail. Because of overwhelming requests for the articles, in 1988 the articles were published in a book, *Charlene, A Saint From Southwest Louisiana?* The book quickly sold out resulting

in permission from Bishop Frey to reprint it using the simple name, *Charlene*. In 2002, with the publication of *Charlene: The Little Cajun Saint*, Mrs. Gutierrez began anew documenting “even more testimonies about why people believe Charlene is a saint.”<sup>9</sup> Bishop Edward J. O’Donnell, Bishop of the Diocese of Lafayette, writes in the forward to the book, “Charlene Richard is an example to all of us living our life in Christ... Somehow this simple girl from southwest Lafayette touched the hearts of thousands of people and helped them understand better the meaning of love.”<sup>10</sup>

The enduring message of Pope John Paul II echoes gently in the hearts of women and men, young and old who have come to know the young Charlene. The youth of the world are our greatest treasure was the resounding and passionate message delivered in 1985 during the International Youth Year proclaimed by St. John Paul II.<sup>11</sup> Charlene Marie Richard died on August 11, 1959. She did not live to hear or read the words of St. John Paul II. She has, however, become known as the greatest treasure, the “Little Cajun Saint,” to all who know, hear, and read about answers given through her intercession to those suffering, dying, or in need.

Anticipating the 57<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Charlene Richard’s death, believers fervently pray that one day this most extraordinary ordinary young girl will be elevated to the sacred status of sainthood. The road to sainthood lacks the simple twists and turns of the country road leading to the cemetery that is home to worshipers at Charlene’s grave. While no official petition to the Holy See has taken place, one thing is certain: those who pray to her believe in her powerful intervention. “For hundreds, even thousands of faithful who have learned the story of Charlene Marie Richard, the lack of official sanction by the church is just a minor concern.”<sup>12</sup>

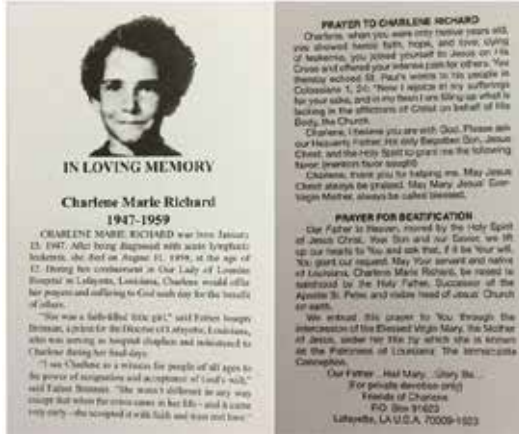
It is no coincidence that both Frs. Brennan and Calais conclude their interview remarks with a confession that each prays daily to Charlene. They, along with thousands who make the pilgrimage to her grave each year, continue to pray for special intentions to the young girl who first made her special presence known to southwest Louisiana and to the world in the simple words, “My name is Charlene.”

## Endnotes

- 1 Megan Wyatt, “Anniversary of the Death of Charlene Richard,” *The Daily Advertiser*, August 3, 2014 <http://www.theadvertiser.com/story/news/local/acadiana/2014/08/02/anniversary-death-charlene-richard/13525403/>
- 2 Barbara Guterrez, *Charlene: Little Cajun Saint* (Lynd Publishing, 2002), 49-54.
- 3 Donna McGee Onebane, “Charlene Richard: Narrative, Transmission, & Function of a Contemporary Saint Legend,” *Folklore in Louisiana*, [http://www.louisianafolklife.org/LT/Articles\\_Essays/CharleneRichard.html](http://www.louisianafolklife.org/LT/Articles_Essays/CharleneRichard.html) accessed June 30, 2016
- 4 Barbara Guterrez, “The Little Cajun Saint,” *Extension: The Magazine of Mission America*, July 1992: 18.
- 5 Fr. Joseph Brennan, personal interview, June 7, 2016.
- 6 Fr. Joseph Brennan, personal interview, June 7, 2016
- 7 Fr. Floyd Calais, personal interview, June 24, 2016.
- 8 “Thousands Honor Charlene Richard,” *The Daily Advertiser*, August 12, 1989.
- 9 Barbara Guterrez, *Charlene: The Little Cajun Saint* (Lynd Publishing, 2002), xviii-xvix.
- 10 Ibid. xii-xiv.

- 11 Dilecti Amici (March 31, 1985) Pope John Paul II, [https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_letters/1985/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_apl\\_31031985\\_dilecti-amici.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1985/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_31031985_dilecti-amici.html), accessed July 5, 2016.
- 12 Marcia Gaudet, "Charlene Richard: Folk Veneration among the Cajuns," *Southern Folklore* 51(2) (1994): 153-126.





*Prayer card dedicated to Charlene Richard's beatification.*



*Picture and prayer mounted on top of Charlene's grave in Richard, LA.*



*St. Edward Church, Richard, LA. The grave yard is adjacent to the church. The church was built while Father Calais was pastor. He says the funds for its construction were made possible through the intercession of Charlene.*



*Charlene's grandparents' house in Richard, LA. Charlene enjoyed spending time at her grandparents' home. The house where Charlene lived with her parents and siblings, which was located next to Charlene's grandparents' home, is no longer in existence.*

*Father Floyd Calais was appointed pastor of St. Edward's Church in Richard shortly after Charlene's death. He spread the story of Charlene's special intervention in his life to those living near and far. He continues to pray for her and to visit her grave. Fr. Calais is now retired.*



*Fr. Joseph Brennan. During the time of Charlene's illness, Fr. Brennan was serving as chaplain at Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital in Lafayette, LA. Newly ordained, he was asked to tell Charlene she was going to die. Fr. Brennan is now retired.*



*Charlene Richard's grave in Richard, LA is adorned with flowers, a rosary, medals, and coins; and a clear rectangular box is filled with notes and requests from visitors near and far. Charlene's grave is the only grave in the cemetery with a prie dieu (prayer kneeler) for visitors to kneel and pray. (All photos were taken by the author.)*

## **Notes and Documents**

# **The Grand Old Man: Christopher Edward Byrne, Fourth Bishop of Galveston (1918-1950)**

By Sister Madeleine Grace, C.V.I. \*

Historians have often described Christopher Edward Byrne, the fourth bishop of Galveston, as the Grand Old Man.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps this is due to the fact that he loved to be with people. He also never forgot a name. He became well known and well liked for his speaking ability. Born in Byrnesville, Missouri on April 21, 1867, he prepared for the priesthood at St. Mary's College in Kansas<sup>2</sup> and St. Mary's Seminary in Baltimore, where he was ordained on September 23 in 1891. Prior to his appointment as bishop of Galveston, he was designated as pastor of Holy Name Church in St. Louis. In addition, he served as the diocesan director of the Holy Name Society and was a member of the Archdiocesan School Board. Due to failing health and seeking a more temperate climate, Fr. Byrne moved to San Antonio in 1898. As his health became stronger, he returned to parish life in St. Louis.<sup>3</sup>

Christopher Byrne was ordained to the episcopate on November 10, 1918 by John Cardinal Glennon in St. Louis. If one were to search out the focus established by Bishop Byrne, it was apparent in his first sermon, given on Thanksgiving Day in 1918 at St. Mary's Cathedral in Galveston. As he stated:

The Church must have native men and women to do her work, or she will be hopelessly outdistanced. This need of vocations among the youth of my diocese is to be my first priority. If Catholicism has not taken that deep hold on the people which will make them dedicate their young to God's service, it cannot endure. By their fruits you shall know them. If Catholicism does not bear forth this fruit of vocations, then Catholicism is dead.<sup>4</sup>

This focus on native vocations led the newly ordained bishop to provide immediate assistance to St. Mary's seminary in La Porte, both from an academic standpoint and in improving the physical facilities. Under his leadership, the original building of St. Mary's was moved to La Porte. Major alterations followed.

Bishop Byrne bought the Gresham home for the Bishop's residence in Galveston in 1923. Colonel Walter Gresham, railroad magnate, attorney, entrepreneur and one time member of the Texas legislature, had the home designed by the renowned architect, Nicholas Clayton, in 1892. It soon became known as the Bishop's Palace. The bishop lived there with his two sisters, Mary Byrne and Ellen Byrne. While many might have thought the dwelling presumed a lavish life style, in fact the bishop lived there in utter simplicity.<sup>5</sup>

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*Bishop Christopher Edward Byrne (1867-1950), fourth bishop of the Diocese of Galveston.  
Photo courtesy of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston.*



*Contestants in Bathing Girl Revue, Galveston, Texas, May 13, 1923.  
Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress.*



Bishop Byrne brought to the Galveston diocese a number of religious orders including the following: the LaSalettes, Passionists, Redemptorists, Franciscans, Society of the Divine Word, Augustinian Fathers, Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, Dominican Sisters of the Second Order, Felician Sisters, Sisters of the Atonement, Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, Sisters of St. Francis of Our Lady of Lourdes, Holy Cross Sisters, Sister Servants of the Holy Ghost, Holy Family Sisters, Sacred Heart Sisters, and the Sisters of Divine Providence. Bishop Byrne also became known for providing spiritual care and charitable facilities for the Spanish-speaking and English-speaking Catholics.

On the occasion of the Centennial of the diocese in 1947, Bishop Byrne was given a fund of a million dollars for the promotion of various education enterprises.<sup>6</sup> The most notable fruit of this gift was the re-establishment of St. Mary's Seminary in Houston on Memorial drive. The move occurred in 1954 after the bishop's death. Two institutions of higher learning were also established during this era of the 1940s. St. Joseph Training School for Nurses was founded in December of 1904 by Sr. M. Ignatius. It was affiliated with the University of Houston and then in the 1940s with Sacred Heart Dominican College, which awarded its first degrees in 1949. In June of 1946, Bishop Byrne announced that the Basilians had purchased a tract of land as the future site of the University of St. Thomas. Fr. V. J. Guinan, CSB, as the first president, opened the doors of the University of St. Thomas the following year.<sup>7</sup>

A remarkable bridge between the episcopates of Bishop Nicholas Gallagher and Bishop Christopher Byrne may be seen in the lives of two young seminarians who came to the diocese of Galveston through the urging of Bishop Gallagher: James Kirwin and Louis J. Reicher. Each seminarian chose to complete his seminary training in Galveston and dedicate many years of his priestly career here extending into the administration of Bishop Byrne. Francis Janssens, the Archbishop of New Orleans, had advised Bishop Gallagher that if he placed a personable cleric at the Cathedral in Galveston, this would facilitate better communication in the diocese. Fr. James Kirwin was stationed at St. Mary's in Galveston. Fr. Kirwin originated from Bishop Gallagher's home state of Ohio. As he possessed superb speaking skills and was very outgoing by nature, he traveled with Bishop Gallagher to significant diocesan events, often delivering the homily for the occasion while Bishop Gallagher was the celebrant for the Mass and /or provided a special blessing for the event. When the administration of the seminary in La Porte was transferred from the Basilians to diocesan clergy, Fr. Kirwin dedicated much of his time to teaching the young men. He served as Vicar General of the diocese for a number of years and was much esteemed, due in part to his gallant ministry toward the survivors of the 1900 hurricane. Upon the death of Bishop Gallagher, Fr. Kirwin remained President of the seminary, likewise continuing in service as Vicar General. While Bishop Byrne was an excellent homilist, the speaking abilities of Fr. Kirwin were called upon in other capacities. Fr. Kirwin was named Monsignor by Pope Pius XI on June 24, 1922.<sup>8</sup>

When Louis J. Reicher was in seminary training in Cincinnati, he wrote Bishop Gallagher expressing an interest in becoming a "missionary" priest. The young Reicher completed his seminary studies in La Porte and was ordained to the priesthood at St. Mary's Cathedral in Galveston on December 6, 1918. This was the first ordination over which Bishop Byrne presided. As Fr. Reicher expressed an ease with the financial and business world, he was appointed Chancellor of the diocese. He served in that role for twenty nine years. In addition, Fr. Reicher organized St. Christopher's Parish, serving as its pastor till 1943. Reicher facilitated the purchase of a chancery building and "the Bishop's Palace" in 1923. As Chancellor of the

diocese, Fr. Reicher lived at the Cathedral rectory. This was likewise true of the Vicar General, Msgr. Kirwin. Unfortunately, it was Fr. Reicher, who, while serving as acting pastor of St. Christopher in Houston, returned from saying Mass to discover that Msgr. Kirwin had died of a heart attack. Fr. Reicher not only supervised the finances of St. Mary's Seminary but also the construction of the Kirwin Memorial Chapel at the seminary. Pope Pius XI honored Fr. Reicher with the title of Monsignor in 1940. Eight years later he was consecrated a bishop for the new diocese of Austin.<sup>9</sup>

When Bishop Byrne was appointed to the episcopate, there were 70 priests working in the diocese along with 35 additional priests who were affiliated with religious orders. Upon his death in 1950, there were 200 priests working in the diocese: 110 diocesan priests and 90 priests in religious orders. There were 3090 children attending Catholic school in 1918 and 30,000 at his death. The Catholic population had increased during his episcopacy from 70,000 to over 250,000,<sup>10</sup>

Bishop Byrne was very much involved in moral issues of the day, both within and beyond the Galveston diocese. He spoke against the legalization of abortion in the Soviet Union in the 1920s and he expressed the Catholic Church's opposition to contraception during a time when Margaret Sanger was agitating in favor of contraception for American women.<sup>11</sup>

Bishop Byrne was also a strong and vocal advocate for public modesty. He protested against "bathing beauty" contests that were conducted along the beaches of Galveston and which were typically connected with "Splash Days" at the beginning of the summer. It is said that while leading the Stations of the Cross during Holy Week one year that he stopped at the tenth station (Jesus is stripped of his garments) and delivered a twenty-minute sermon against bathing beauty contests.

Bishop Byrne also insisted that parishioners dress modestly when they came to Mass. In an undated letter, he directed diocesan priests to instruct church ushers to forbid any woman or girl from entering a church who was dressed in "knickers, sailor suit or pajamas." Furthermore, he wrote, "You are to remove from duty any usher who would refuse or neglect to enforce this order, for such a one would not have the reverence for the Mass or the presence of Our Lord that he should."<sup>12</sup>

During a time when the movie industry was becoming a major cultural force in American society, Bishop Byrne was a strong supporter of the Legion Decency, the Catholic organization that alerted Catholic families about morally objectionable movies.<sup>13</sup> In a 1937 letter, he ordered all priests to read the Legion's oath after the Masses for the following Sunday and to require parishioners to repeat the oath "in a loud voice."<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, if a movie theater showed a film that was considered "questionable," Bishop Byrne asked Catholics to boycott that movie theater for a year.<sup>15</sup>

While Bishop Byrne suffered from a heart ailment most of his adult life, the suddenness of his fatal heart attack Saturday, April 1, 1950, took most by surprise. During his thirty-two-year episcopate he was responsible for the establishment of many churches, schools, hospitals, and orphanages. Much of the funding for this expansion came from his own skill at building personal relationships with civic leaders and philanthropists who supported his work regardless of their own religious preference.<sup>16</sup> A frequently cited example refers to the sizable contribution given by a beer company to the Galveston diocese and to a Protestant denomination. The other denomination refused the gift on the grounds that the money was "tainted." Bishop Byrne graciously accepted the gift and humorously quipped that in fact the

funds “taint” enough. Following Bishop Byrne’s highly publicized remark, the beer company gave the money refused by the other denomination to the Catholic diocese.<sup>17</sup> He was also involved in public enterprises, such as the Texas Good Neighbor Commission.

On April 28, 1950, not long after Bishop Byrne’s death, the Texas State Senate adopted a resolution honoring his many achievements and summarizing his many virtues with these words

He was a mighty champion of right, fearless in his espousal of causes that he felt to be just; yet he was a man of sweet and kindly disposition, whose tolerance, understanding and a magnanimous spirit made him one to be loved as well as respected . . . The life of Bishop Byrne will always be an inspiration to those who knew him and his memory will be honored down through the years.<sup>18</sup>

## Endnotes

- 1 Carlos E. Castaneda, *The Church in Texas since Independence, 1836-1950*, vol.7 of *Our Catholic Heritage in Texas, 1519-1936* ( Austin, Texas: Von Boeckmann-Jones Company, 1958), 273.
- 2 Castaneda, VII, 477.
- 3 Fr. James F. Vanderholt, Carolyn B. Martinez and Karen A. Gilman, *The Diocese of Beaumont: The Catholic Story of Southeast Texas*. (Catholic diocese of Beaumont, TX: *East Texas Catholic*, 1991), 35.
- 4 Vanderholt, Martinez, and Gilman, *The Diocese of Beaumont*, 36.
- 5 Robert C. Giles, *Changing Times: The Story of the Diocese of Galveston Houston in Commemoration of its Founding, 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Diocese of Galveston-Houston, 1847- 1972*, forward by Bishop Wendelin J. Nold and Bishop John L. Morkovsky ( Houston: Texas Catholic Herald Production Staff: Most Rev. John L. Morkovsky, STD, 1972), 57.
- 6 “Valiant Shepherd, Christopher Edward Byrne, Fourth Bishop of Galveston,” *Diocese of Galveston Centennial 1847-1947*, 37-38.
- 7 James Talmadge Moore, *Acts of Faith: The Catholic Church in Texas, 1900-1950*. (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2002), 225.
- 8 Castaneda, 7:273.
- 9 Moore, *Acts of Faith*, 207-209.
- 10 Giles, *Changing Times: The Story of the Diocese of Galveston-Houston in Commemoration of its Founding, 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Diocese of Galveston-Houston, 1847- 1972*, 58.
- 11 Moore, *Acts of Faith*, 141.
- 12 Bishop Christopher E. Byrne, undated pastoral letter. Catholic Archives of Texas, Austin, TX.
- 13 Moore, *Acts of Faith*, 141
- 14 Bishop Christopher E. Byrne, pastor letter, December 5, 1937. Catholic Archives of Texas, Austin, TX.
- 15 Vanderholt, Martinez and Gilman, *The Diocese of Beaumont*, 37.
- 16 Diocese of Galveston-Houston, 1847-1997, forward by Bishop Joseph A. Fiorenza. (Dallas TX: Taylor Publishing Co, 1997), 48.
- 17 Vanderholt, Martinez and Gilman, *The Diocese of Beaumont*, 37.

- 18 Giles, *Changing Times: The Story of the Diocese of Galveston-Houston in Commemoration of its Founding, 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Diocese of Galveston-Houston, 1847- 1972*, 58.

# The Gothic Churches of the Dallas Diocese: A Photographic Essay

By Steven T. Landregan \*

God alone knows when the first Catholic settlers arrived in that northern quadrant of Texas that in 1890 became the Diocese of Dallas. They may have come from Louisiana on the Red River, or from Tennessee or Missouri through the Indian Territory that is now Oklahoma, or up from Galveston or Houston by wagon or ox cart. They came singly, in families, in ethnic groups: Germans, Mexicans, Czechs, French and Syrians. They followed various occupations: farmers, merchants, blacksmiths and wayfarers.

Missionary priests served the early Catholic settlers, probably coming first from Nacogdoches and later from St. Paul missionary station founded in Collin County. These priests would visit the Catholics of North Texas once or twice a year to baptize infants, perform weddings, and celebrate the Eucharist in someone's home. Soon Catholic communities sprang up on the prairie and needed a permanent place for celebrating the Eucharist and the sacraments.

Life on the Texas frontier was spartan. The first Catholic churches and chapels were austere wooden structures with benches for pews, a far cry from the great cathedrals of France and Germany or the grand churches of New Orleans and St. Louis. Architecture of the frontier Catholic church was often similar to the churches of the Protestant Reformation, usually a simple rectangular wooden building. Of course, there was always a cross, but something else often set a Catholic church apart – a gothic door or window.

It is interesting that somehow, the addition of a pointed arch to a window or door seemed to authenticate in the minds of Catholic people that a building, no matter how ordinary in appearance, was indeed a place of divine worship. The term Prairie Gothic seems to capture the dichotomy between a touch of medieval grandeur and the stark simplicity usually found in these frontier church buildings.

In North Texas, the founding of a Catholic church was often directly linked to the arrival of the railroad. In almost every instance, a community's first Catholic church appeared from one to three years after a railhead community was established by a railroad company. The coming of the railroads brought an end to the circuit riding missionary priests with their saddlebag Mass kits, who often spent months on horseback bringing the sacraments to their scattered flocks.

Today, when cameras are ubiquitous, we forget that the first recorded photograph was made in 1816, only 20 years before the Battle of San Jacinto. Many of the photographs in the following pages were copied from books and newspapers. They may not be the pristine prints we are accustomed to seeing in glossy publications, but they are relics, touchstones of our history. All photos are from the Diocese of Dallas Archives.

\* Steven T. Landregan is retired Historian and Archivist for the Diocese of Dallas and former Editor of *The Texas Catholic*, the official newspaper of the Diocese of Dallas.

### **Immaculate Conception Church, Jefferson, 1867**

Jefferson, Texas, county seat of Marion County, is among the earliest Northeast Texas communities, thanks to its location on Big Cypress Creek, which provided a navigable connection to the Red River. Jefferson was founded in the early 1840s by immigrants from the Southern states. In 1855 the first Catholics arrived in the community. Father Jean Marie Giraud visited the Jefferson Catholics and celebrated Mass in the early 1860s. In 1866 Protestant businessmen donated land for a Catholic church to Bishop Claude Dubuis of Galveston who established Immaculate Conception Parish and named Father Giraud first pastor. Under Father Giraud's direction the first church was completed in 1867, but was moved a year later to another site. Parishioners accomplished the move by attaching the church to a team of oxen and dragging the structure over logs to its new location a block away. In 1992, the church was extensively damaged by fire, but it was completely restored and stands today as it did when first dedicated in 1866. Jefferson thrived as Texas' busiest inland port but went from boom to bust when it was bypassed by the railroad and the breakup of the Red River log jam that lowered the water level of Big Cypress Bayou, rendering the Red River unnavigable.

### **Immaculate Conception Church, Corsicana, 1903**

Immaculate Conception Parish in Corsicana is the oldest continuously active parish in the Diocese of Dallas. The parish was established in 1871, the same year as the arrival of the Houston and Texas Central Railroad. Corsicana has ties to Texas patriot José Antonio Navarro, one of the Catholic signers of the Texas Declaration of Independence. At the patriot's request, Corsicana was named for Navarro's father's birthplace, the Island of Corsica. Navarro County, established in 1847, honors the hero himself. The first church was completed in 1872. Prior to the parish foundation, Catholics were ministered to from 1870 by Father Henry Gieson, Redemptorist missionary, who celebrated Mass in the home of John Noonan. Father Peter Chandy was the first pastor. The building pictured in this essay was Corsicana's second Catholic Church. It was built in 1903 and served the community until the present facility was built in 1955.

### **Sacred Heart Church, Rowlett, 1899**

Sacred Heart Church in Rowlett is a classic example of Prairie Gothic. The church was built in 1899 on a plot donated by Patrick McEntee, who had moved to the area with his family in 1874. Bishop E. J. Dunne dedicated the structure the following year. For many years, Mass had been celebrated in the McEntee home by visiting priests. It is safe to say that few, if any, churches have survived the experiences that Sacred Heart has. The church was built in what was then downtown Rowlett, facing north toward the tracks of the Texas and Pacific Railroad, which had reached the town in 1886. In 1922 a tornado blew the church off of its bois d'arc block foundation. During repairs it was turned 180 degrees to face south so that it faced a new highway. The tiny church was a mission of various parishes until Rowlett became part of the Dallas sprawl; and a new, larger church was built about a mile away from the original church in 1992. Once more, the old church was moved, this time to the new parish site, where it was completely renovated. In the spring of 2016, the old church suffered considerable damage from baseball-size hailstones.



*Immaculate Conception Church,  
Jefferson, TX. All photos courtesy  
of the Archives of the Diocese of  
Dallas.*



*Immaculate Conception  
Church, Corsicana, TX.*



*Sacred Heart Church, Rowlett, TX.*



*Sacred Heart Church, Dallas, TX.*



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### **Sacred Heart Church, Dallas, 1873**

What a year 1873 was for Dallas. The year not only marked the dedication of the city's first Catholic church, but also the arrival of the railroad and telegraph. Marist missionary Father Marthurin Pairier, first pastor of the parish that was established in 1872, oversaw the construction of the frame church at Cottage Lane and Masten that was destined to become Dallas' pro-cathedral in 1890. Later, after the new Sacred Heart Cathedral was completed in 1902, the old church was disassembled and the materials used to build St. Peter's church, the first parish for Black Catholics. Before the founding of Sacred Heart, Dallas Catholics were served by missionary circuit rider priests from Nacogdoches, St. Paul, Fort Belknap and Galveston. The first Catholic Mass of record in Dallas was in the home of Maxime Guillot, French immigrant and carriage maker. It was celebrated in the summer of 1859 by French Missionary Priest Sebastian Augagneur.

### **St. Anthony Church, Longview, 1884**

There were few Catholics in the sparsely populated area that became Gregg County until the railroad established the community of Longview in the early 1870s. Like many Texas cities, Longview was a creature of the railroad. The town was established sometime around 1870 when the Southern Pacific Railroad (later the Texas and Pacific) bypassed two existing Gregg County communities and founded the new town of Longview. The city was incorporated in 1871 and Gregg County was established in 1874 with Longview as county seat.

Many of the railroad employees who lived in Longview were Catholics and the need for a parish became apparent not long after the railroad arrived. Bishop Claude Dubuis of Galveston established St. Anthony Parish about 1880. The first Catholic church was dedicated in 1884 by Bishop Nicolas Gallagher of Galveston. Much of the construction material for the frame church was donated and labor provided by parishioners. The first church was enlarged in 1934 and a new brick church was dedicated in 1941 by Bishop Joseph Patrick Lynch of Dallas.

### **St. Helen Church, Hillsboro, 1899**

The town of Hillsboro was founded in 1853, when the town was specifically laid out to serve as the county seat of the newly established Hill County. The town was not incorporated until 1881, the year that the Missouri, Kansas, and Texas Railroad ("the Katy") arrived and established its shops, bringing new jobs and new citizens, many of them Catholic.

Catholic settlers lived in the area beginning in the 1840s, before either Hill County or the town of Hillsboro were established. Before 1875 Catholics travelled to Waco for Mass, but in 1887 Hillsboro Mission was established. Father A. Badelon, pastor of the Assumption Church in Waco, came to Hillsboro and celebrated Mass in the home of H. P. Harrington and continued coming regularly until he retired in 1894. Beginning in 1896 Mass was celebrated in the old Cumberland School.

The first church was built in 1899 and featured a high steeple and cross. Because of the prominence of the cross, the parish was named St. Helen's, in honor of Emperor Constantine's mother, St. Helena, who, according to Catholic tradition, found the True Cross in Jerusalem. The church was dedicated by Bishop Edward Joseph Dunne, second Bishop of Dallas, in

November, 1899. In 1929 a new church was built at a different location and the name was changed to Our Lady of Mercy.

### **St. James Church, Sulphur Springs, 1903**

Catholic presence in the area of Hopkins County that became Sulphur Springs dates to the 1850s when the former Indian campground became a favorite stop for ox cart drivers hauling cargo from the port of Jefferson to North Texas communities. The town was originally named Bright Star because its citizens considered their community the brightest star on the frontier. Bright Star dimmed when it was bypassed by the railroad, and its name was changed to Sulphur Springs when the town became county seat in 1871.

Before 1880 the few Catholics in Hopkins County were visited once or twice a year by circuit riding missionary priests from Nacogdoches. More Catholic families came with the railroad when it arrived in 1879. St. James the Greater Parish was erected by Bishop Claude Dubuis of Galveston in 1880 and he dedicated the church that same year. At the time it was established, St. James was the only Catholic parish between Dallas and Jefferson in Far East Texas.

St. James was a mission parish until 1966, when it was assigned to the Glenmary Fathers and had its first fulltime pastor. In 1894 the original church building was destroyed by a cyclone and the second church (pictured in this essay) was built in 1903. It served until 1955 when the present church was constructed.

### **St. John Church, McKinney, 1895**

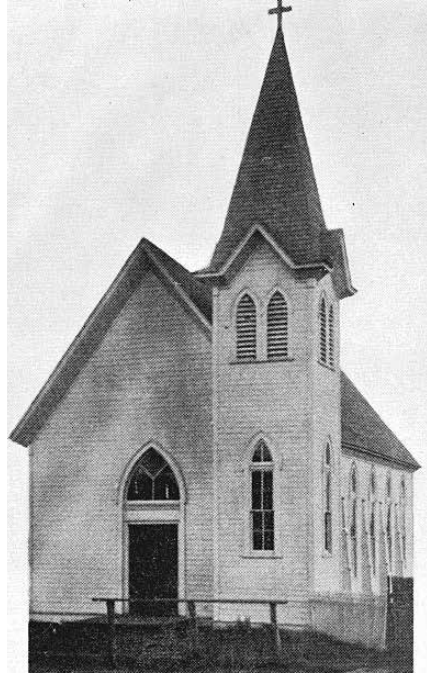
Like so many Catholic communities in North East and North Central Texas, Catholics in the Collin County area were served by circuit riding missionary priests. One such missionary priest was Father Anthony O'Hara, who in 1895, built St. John, the first Catholic church in McKinney, Texas, described as "a small frame church at the edge of town." The simple building shown above was erected on land donated by a Protestant. In 1906 the church's name was changed to St. Michael the Archangel. In 1914 a larger frame church was constructed which served until 1960. It was this photo of the austere little wooden church of St. John in McKinney that was the inspiration for the original *Prairie Gothic* eBook, published by Steven T. Landregan in 2015. St. John and hundreds of other Catholic churches that punctuate the Texas countryside are both witness and tribute to Catholic men and women who brought the Catholic Church to Texas.

### **St. John the Apostle Church, Terrell, 1876**

In 1876, Bishop Claude Dubuis of Galveston established the parish of St. John in Terrell, Texas. Terrell was established as a railroad town. In a familiar pattern, many of the workers who came with the Texas and Pacific railroad in 1873 were Catholics and added to the early Catholic population in the area. Prior to the erection of the parish, Catholics in the area were served by the priest brothers, Fathers Joseph and Claude Martiniere. The original church underwent several major renovations, including a 1945 facelift that covered the steeple and front façade with concrete, which was removed when the church was restored to its original configuration in 1990. Later, the present mission style church was built and dedicated in 1981 by Bishop Thomas Tschoepe of Dallas.



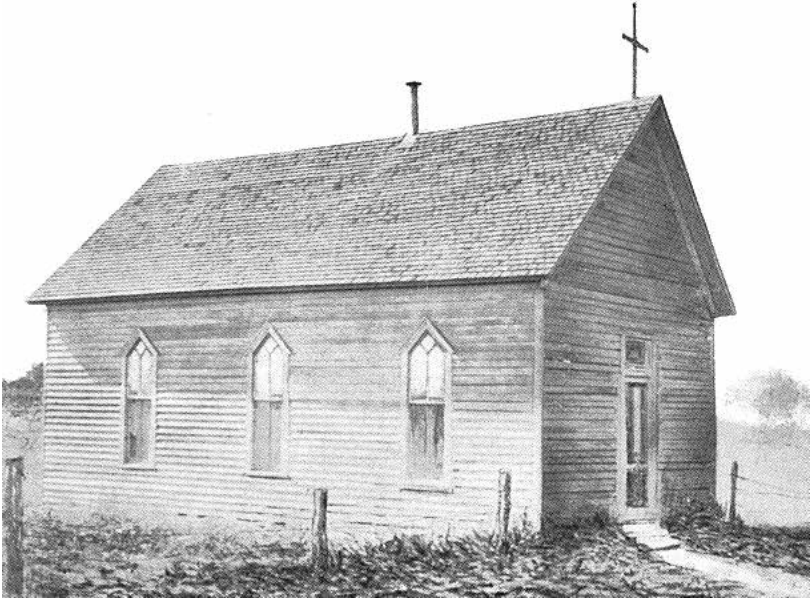
*St. Anthony Church, Longview, TX.*



*St. Helen Church, Hillsboro, TX.*



*St. James Church, Sulphur Springs, TX.*



*St. John Church, McKinney, TX.*



*St. John the Apostle Church, Terrell, TX.*

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### **St. Joseph Church, Clarksville, 1873**

Catholics were among the early residents of Clarksville, one of the oldest communities in North Texas. The county seat of Red River County, Clarksville was founded in 1833 and incorporated in 1837 by the Republic of Texas Congress. Catholic immigrants to the area came from Louisiana and other Southern states by means of the Red River. Father Donohue, a missionary priest from Little Rock, visited the nascent Catholic community in the 1840s, celebrating Mass at the home of a Dr. Lee. Circuit riding missionary priests from Nacogdoches and Little Rock continued to visit Clarksville in the 1860s. In 1871, Bishop Claude Dubuis of Galveston established St. Joseph Parish. Father Theodore Buford, the first pastor, built the first church, which was dedicated by Bishop Claude Dubuis in 1873. That church was destroyed by fire in 1930 and was replaced by a second church. The present church was built in 1956.

### **St. Mary's Church, Dublin, 1884**

Old St. Mary's Church in Dublin, Texas is now comfortably retired as a community center. "The Little Church on Grafton Street," the name used by local citizens for many years, was donated to the Dublin Historical Society after serving as a house of worship for three mainline denominations over the past 116 years. The white frame church was originally built in 1884 by the First Methodist Church. In 1890 the church was bought and moved to a new location by a Presbyterian congregation, which then sold it to the Catholic community in 1916. Dublin was first settled in 1854, two years before Erath County was established. Indians were still active in the area and it is said that when the town was named in 1860, the name Dublin came, not from the Irish capital, but from "double in," the warning cry to take shelter from an Indian raid. Before there was a parish, Oblate Fathers from Brownwood celebrated Mass in the home of the Courtney family, who built benches in their home to accommodate worshippers. St. Mary Church was dedicated by Bishop Joseph Patrick Lynch in 1917 as a mission from Brownwood and served Catholics from Stephenville, Hico, Hamilton, De Leon and Comanche. When a new St. Mary Church was built in 2002, the historic building was donated to the Dublin Historical Society.

### **St. Mary's Church, Gainesville, 1879**

Father Louis Granger, a missionary priest and circuit rider, first visited the Catholic community of Marshall, Texas in the 1870s. Tradition has it that he celebrated Mass on the top of a square piano in the home of Dr. J. E. Gilcrest. Father Granger was followed by Father Peter A. Levy in 1879, who built a cabin in 1881 that served as both a chapel and a rectory. Construction of the first frame church was started in 1888 by Father P. F. Sullivan, but was completed in 1891 after Father Henry D. Brickley was named pastor. The church was destroyed by fire in 1920. Gainesville was founded by three families in 1850 as part of Peter's Colony, an 1841 empresario grant from the Republic of Texas, which ultimately included Dallas and many other North Central Texas cities. Only seven miles from the Oklahoma border, Gainesville became a way station for cowboys herding stock to Kansas. Gainesville was a stop on the Butterfield Overland Mail Route in 1858.

**St. Mary's Church, Clarendon, 1892**

St. Mary's Church in Clarendon, Texas was the first Catholic parish in the Texas Panhandle, a 26,000 square mile area created when the state's boundaries were established after the Mexican War. Known as the "Last Frontier," the area was primarily devoted to cattle ranching until the coming of the railroad in 1887. In 1891 the Catholic population was increased by the decision of the Fort Worth and Denver City Railroad to locate a roundhouse in the city, which brought many new German and Irish Catholic families. Catholics were first served by priests sent from Henrietta but Bishop Thomas Francis Brennan of Dallas decided to establish St. Mary's parish in 1891. A new church was completed and dedicated in June 1892. When the railroad moved the roundhouse to Childress in 1903, many of the Catholic families also moved and the Catholic population dwindled. Priests came from Childress and Amarillo to celebrate Mass on Sunday, but the church fell into disrepair; and by 1949 it was covered by brush and both the bell tower and vestibule had been removed. Bishop Laurence J. FitzSimon of Amarillo ordered the church restored and in 1959 he rededicated the church as the Shrine of Our Lady of the Panhandle.



*St. Joseph Church, Clarksville, TX.*



*St. Mary's Church, Dublin, TX.*



*St. Mary's Church, Gainesville, TX.*



*St. Mary's Church, Clarendon, TX.*



## BOOK REVIEWS

Thomas W. Jodziewicz, Editor

John Francis Burke. *Building Bridges, Not Walls: Nourishing Diverse Cultures in Faith/Construyamos puentes, no muros: Alimentar a las diversas culturas en la fe*. Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2016. Pp. xxi, 212. \$24.95 paper.

With the rise of the Latino/a population in the United States, the face of the nation is changing dramatically and so is that of the Catholic Church, bringing new challenges to pastoral ministry. John Francis Burke, a political scientist who has examined cultural change in other works, merges theory and practice in this bilingual study/manual, *Building Bridges, Not Walls – Construyamos puentes, no muros*. As someone with extensive experience as a lay liturgical leader in various Catholic congregations, Dr. Burke defies the stereotype of the scholar in an ivory tower.

Right off in Chapter One, “Inculturation: Multiple Ways of Understanding and Communicating the Gospel,” the author describes the scene of a choir director in a multicultural parish selecting Pan de Vida, an English-Spanish hymn, as an example of universal Christian truths expressed in the context of a twenty-first century American Catholic community. All this may seem new to the average churchgoer, but in fact one can find the process of integrating faith and culture in the early Church where the Jewish disciples of Christ took the Gospel into the neighboring Greek world, the dynamics of which was “bidirectional,” meaning that cultural context of evangelization in some way enriches the message of salvation without changing its universal truth.

Just how the faith is introduced, expounded, and expressed parallels the cultural interaction in the society in general, and the Americanization of immigrants in the schools, the workplace, and entertainment is often replicated in the parish. Accordingly, pastors and lay ministers must recognize “the ethnocentric temptation” of evangelization in today’s “shared parishes,” situations in many ways very different from the national parishes of yesteryear. But the Christian tradition at its very core, the Eucharist, is unifying at the same time that it embraces a Pentecostal diversity. Just how all this works out in liturgical expressions, in parish councils, in retreats, or in homilies is not simple and easy, but the author shows that it is doable.

Though brief (half of the 212 pages of text are in Spanish), this book is packed with socio-cultural and power-relationship theories and suggested changes in perspective and practical strategies. To be sure, Burke’s valuable insights are very useful for all involved in ministry, clerical or lay, but because the author brings a strong academic understanding, including concepts from Latino theology, to a real world setting, *este librito es para todo mundo* (this little book is for everyone).

Gilberto M. Hinojosa  
University of the Incarnate Word

Gerald M. Cattaro and Charles J. Russo, eds. *Gravissimum Educationis: Golden Opportunities in American Catholic Education 50 Years After Vatican II*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015. Pp. vii, 172. \$34.00 paper.

This anthology of essays examines the impact of the Vatican II document regarding Catholic education, *Gravissimum Educationis*, a half-century since its release in 1965. In that year, as noted in the volume, the number of Catholic elementary schools reached its peak of 10,667. Today, only half that many remain and the total number of students is one-third of what it was in 1965.

Despite this dramatic drop, the contributors remain very sanguine that Catholic schools all the way through higher education are creatively integrating the themes of the Vatican II document with contemporary education practices of management and assessment. Some of the entries provide valuable information – 1) a litany of how First Amendment Free Exercise and Establishment Clause cases have affected Catholic schools and 2) different models of lay leadership and lay board structures that have been tried as administrative responsibility for the schools has shifted from clergy to laity.

The volume also makes a contribution when it focuses on specific programs that are invigorating Catholic schools, especially with a focus on social justice and community engagement. One chapter reviews the success of 1) the Jesuit Cristo Rey Network that recruits low income students, 2) Notre Dame's Alliance for Catholic Education (ACE) Program that prepares college students to be teachers in schools on the economic margins, and 3) the Boston College Two Way Immersion Network (TWIN) that accents biliteracy and bilingualism in schools. Another chapter concludes that compared to their public school counterparts, Catholic students are more likely "to vote, engage in civic affairs, tolerate diverse views, and commit to community service dedicated to the common good" (159).

Despite the volume's sanguine tone, overall this anthology never provides clear direction for resolving some of the key issues facing Catholic education today. These issues include: the above mentioned decline both in the number of schools, as well as in the number of religious as school teachers; the situation that there is "more diversity among students than among faculty in Catholic schools" (72); the fact that non-Catholic private schools are indeed growing at the very time Catholic schools are decreasing; the circumstance that most young Catholics are increasingly found in the Sun Belt whereas most Catholic schools are in the Rust Belt; and the reality that the overall number of US Catholics is dropping (which would be more noticeable were it not for the number of Catholic immigrants which have come to the US in recent years). Most egregious in this volume is that no consideration is given to the caliber of CCD/CCE programs where increasingly most Catholics get their religious instruction or to the need for substantive adult education programs.

Consequently, though each essay in this volume is valuable in a specific sense, overall these findings are a resource for others to draw upon more than a systematic plan of action for fostering a Catholic education from womb to tomb that is not mired in the traditional parochial school model. Going forward, we need to recast *Gravissimum Educationis* with a little less "exuberant optimism" (60) and a little more creative, sober realism.

John Francis Burke  
San Antonio College

John E. Dean. *How Myth Became History: Texas Exceptionalism in the Borderlands*. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2016. Pp. xii, 231. \$50 cloth.

In his latest work John E. Dean, associate professor of literature at Texas A&M International University, sets off on a journey to examine the histories and the stories of the US-Mexico borderlands. Dean traverses time and space examining the contested stories of Texas independence and continues to move forward chronologically, completing his analysis with the views of authors writing about the Mexican Revolution. The work is not meant to be a comprehensive recounting of events during this span of time or even a comprehensive evaluation of the border literature, but instead Dean uses key works to delve into complicated border stories and identities.

Dean begins his analysis with Walter Prescott Webb's *The Texas Rangers* (1965), which Dean views as pivotal in establishing the dominant Anglo American view of the border and its peoples during the era of Texas independence. In this chapter, Dean uses Américo Paredes' *George Washington Gómez* (1990) and Rolando Hinojosa's *The Valley/Estampas del Valle* (2014) to look at authors who are pushing back at this dominant narrative. Within the book Dean also analyzes Ignacio Solares' *Yankee Invasion: A Novel of Mexico City* (2009), Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian: Or Evening Redness in the West* (1992), Carlos Fuentes' *Old Gringo* (2007), Katherine Anne Porter's "Flowering Judas" (1930) and Arturo Islas' *The Rain God: A Desert Tale* (1991). The purpose of the analysis of these historical and literary works is to examine how history is created, passed on to others, resisted, challenged, and negotiated; and Dean has chosen works that offer many opportunities to examine this discourse.

While each chapter is devoted to the analysis of different texts, Dean does an excellent job connecting themes and writings so that the book has a cohesive feel. While primarily a work of literary analysis, *How Myth Became History* offers good historical context. Dean pays much attention to Mexican, Mexican Texan, indigenous, and Anglo populations in the borderlands, and this historiography is quite diverse. A piece of historiography and context that would have enhanced Dean's work can be found in Brian DeLay's analysis and research from *War of a Thousand Deserts* (2009), which examines the roles that Comanches played in setting preconditions for war between the U.S. and Mexico. Nonetheless, the breadth of coverage of Dean's work means that he had to choose his historical context carefully, and he did so.

At times it might be difficult for a reader to follow all of the analysis if not familiar with the literary works covered in *How Myth Became History*. The real value to borderlands historians is that in this work Dean thinks very deeply about what it means to live in the borderlands and to understand, write, recount, and experience the histories. This deep thinking is very theoretical at times, so that the value of the work is also part of its challenge, but an important challenge for borderland historians to tackle.

Amy M. Porter  
Texas A&M University-San Antonio

Jesús F. de la Teja. *Faces of Béxar: Early San Antonio & Texas*. College Station: Texas A&M Press, 2016. Pp. xv, 223. \$40 cloth.

In the ten previously-published essays that are included in this volume, Frank de la Teja, in his friendly and scholarly way, makes a strong case for a claim to be an historian of

shadows. Or, better said, an historian who has enabled those in the historical background in early Texas history to come forward into a revisionist light. History is always a revisionist adventure as older interpretations are challenged, modified, and deepened. In clear and crisp accessible prose balanced nicely in deep and sustained research, the author has explored the rich history of Spanish Texas, particularly the story of San Antonio de B exas. Too often *early* Texas has appeared in historiography simply to be the moment when Anglos began to move into the lightly-populated area west and southwest of Louisiana in the 1820s. A theme visible throughout these essays is captured nicely in a rueful comment in “A Fine Country with Broad Plains---the Most Beautiful in New Spain” regarding the seeming scholarly unimportance of Indian and Hispanic views of the natural environment: “the Hispanic experience is of little relevance to the story of Texas settlement” (35). These ten essays argue quite to the contrary.

The author’s archival work and paleographic expertise are on welcome and fruitful display on topics that range from a consideration of Texas’ Native Americans; to ranching and farming, and efforts to connect with commercial outlets, especially Mexican markets south of the Rio Grande and northeast in Louisiana; to social relations and the Spanish caste system (*sistema de castas*) as revealed in a complicated marriage situation attempting to cut across such barriers; to sports and amusements in this frontier world; and on to the local circumstances during and after the successful Mexican War for Independence. The result of this mosaic of discrete subjects is a portrait of early Tejano (Texans of Mexican heritage) Texas that is seldom available in the few paragraphs that preface the introduction of the “real” Texas, i.e. the Texas of the Texians (Anglo-American folks) who entered the area in ever-larger numbers after the early 1820s, and who would come to full political authority after the Texas War of Independence (1835-1836).

An historical catch-phrase today is “agency,” i.e., the exertion of power or individual choice. For too long those in the shadows, whether Native Americans or slaves or women... or Tejanos... were revealed as apparently passive objects in the historical narrative, acted upon, but seldom actors themselves. This, of course, has changed over the past couple of generations of scholarship with its persisting sympathies for those long neglected, but given readily-available historical sources, not so completely absent from those records. Sometimes, though, in order to right these previous historiographical wrongs, the pendulum has swung perhaps too far in an opposite direction and these “little people” have taken a disproportionate center-stage that does damage to the overall narrative. De la Teja’s scholarship does not commit this new imbalance, but he is alive to a new-old irony regarding the Tejanos he so well encourages out of those historical shadows. The final essay, “The Colonization and Independence of Texas: A Tejano Perspective,” discusses Tejano “agency” during the brief Mexican period (1821-1835) and the Texas War for Independence (1835-1836). Simply, Tejanos favored a federalism over a nascent Mexican centralization of political authority. And so did the Texians, leading them to the ultimate secession from Mexico and consequent creation of the Republic of Texas. The minority Tejano efforts, of course, were not determinative in the event, but de la Teja works through their decisions and frustrated intentions with care, and with no over-claim for their involvement (or “agency”) in these great events. But the last paragraph of the text bears ironic witness to the prejudice that would soon cast its shadow over the Tejano, but also a shadow that would, before work like that of de la Teja and others, already create a relative historiographical silence regarding their ancestors:

Forced from their homes in Nacogdoches and the Goliad-Victoria area and threatened in the vicinity of San Antonio, Tejanos began to disappear from the record. By and large, they were no longer policymakers, judges, and military men --- makers of society. In the land records they became the sellers, not the buyers; in court records they were more often the defendants, not the plaintiffs; in the military records they appeared as the pursued, not as the pursuers. At best, they were tolerated as leaders only within their own isolated communities. In the newly independent Texas, Tejanos became outsiders in the land of their birth (195).

Thomas W. Jodziewicz  
University of Dallas

Maurice M. Dixon, Jr. *The Artistic Odyssey of Higinio V. Gonzales: A Tinsmith and Poet in Territorial New Mexico*, trans. By Alejandro López. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2015. Pp. xliii, 323. \$35 cloth.

In 2004, Maurice Dixon co-authored a catalogue to accompany a Sante Fe exhibition titled *New Mexican Tinwork, 1840-1940*, where he first recognized the sophistication and “audacity” of an artist identified as H. V. Gonzales (1842-1921). Only after publication did he begin to realize that myriad unsigned works might be attributed to Gonzales, and not only the metal *repoussé* devotional objects united in the exhibition, but also literary works—primarily poetry and *corridos* (commemorative ballads).

Dixon’s 2015 text serves as an intricate and sensitive apology to the 2004 exhibition, attempting to prove that Gonzales was indeed the most prolific and important nineteenth-century Southwestern *hojalatero* (tinsmith) through a comprehensive investigation of hundreds of metal objects now held in private and public collections. The works consist primarily of embossed frames or reliquaries that hold devotional images, including *marcos* (flat framing devices), *nichos* (self-supporting repositories) and *panteles* (sconces). Although Gonzales only signed a handful of objects, Dixon argues that, in the unassigned works he studied, key elements clearly identify his hand—specifically his decorative embossed impressions such as the “notched deer track,” which resembles a cloven hoof. Dixon convinces the reader, through his exhaustive research and close observation, that Gonzales is responsible for not just the *repoussé* frames, but also many of the devotional paintings and prints they encompass. To complete the image of Gonzales as “Renaissance Man,” Dixon publishes the unsigned poems that initially appeared in the Las Vegas, N.M. newspaper *La Voz del Pueblo*, again attributing them to our artist. Dixon demonstrates the connection between Gonzales’s literary and visual imagery, and the richness of religious, personal, and historical symbolism evident in his oeuvre.

This text spans two major genres: the artist biography and the catalogue raisonné. In the prefaces and epilogue, Dixon convinces the reader of Gonzales’s myriad talents, not just as artist, but also as soldier in the New Mexico Volunteer Calvary, educator, supporter of the peaceful union between New Mexico and the United States, and advocate of female virtues, both heavenly and earthly. But the bulk of the text is devoted to the careful analysis of the dies and impressions used by the artist in the attempt to identify Gonzales’s metalwork. These observations are enriched by lavish color photographs as well as exhaustive studies of historical documents such as census reports that track Gonzales’s life and career. The text thus reads

primarily as a scholar's tool, yet with the introduction and conclusion of a popular biography. What the general reader craves, perhaps, is a more thorough understanding of the social context of the artworks reproduced: who were the patrons; how were they employed in private homes, chapels, or churches; how do Gonzales's works compare to those of his Mexican or Southwestern contemporaries; how do they fit into New Mexico's tumultuous history during the Civil War and its entry into statehood? One of the author's refrains throughout the text is "if only the surviving tinworks could speak, these puzzling questions would be known." Perhaps the sequel to Dixon's study will expand upon these queries.

Catherine Caesar  
University of Dallas

Steven K. Green. *Inventing Christian America: The Myth of the Religious Founding*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015. Pp. xi, 295. \$29.95 cloth.

In this informative study, Steven K. Green takes up a host of controverted issues relating to the role religion played in America's founding and seeks to set the record straight. A law professor at Willamette University, Green is frustrated by the claims put forth by conservative politicians and scholars about America's supposedly Christian founding. Green addresses what he considers myths regarding both the colonial and revolutionary eras. For the earlier period, the most persistent myth he sees is that the Puritans and other settlers came seeking not only religious freedom for themselves but welcomed people of all faiths to their colonies. Green thoroughly rebuts this claim, showing that religious intolerance was the norm not only in Puritan Boston, but also in Plymouth where Pilgrims whipped Quakers, and in Anglican Virginia where Baptist clergy were jailed. Worst off of all were the Catholics who were disenfranchised in all the colonies, even in Maryland by the late 17<sup>th</sup> century.

More of Green's attention is devoted to the Founding Fathers. He argues persuasively that not one of the key Founders was an orthodox Christian. Washington, Adams, Franklin, Jefferson and Madison were all Enlightenment-influenced and did not affirm Christ's divinity. At the same time, Green notes that secularist historians tend to label them "deists" and that is not quite right, either. He prefers to call them "theistic rationalists," pointing out that all of them believed in divine providence, a doctrine which deists could not countenance. He also notes that some of the lesser known Founders were devout Protestants. He includes on this "second tier" list John Jay (Anglican), Patrick Henry (evangelical) and John Witherspoon, who was a Presbyterian minister.

While some of the Founders were Christian, Green claims that the Declaration of Independence and Constitution drew little if any inspiration from Christian sources. Although a host of nineteenth-century notables including Alexis de Tocqueville, Daniel Webster and Lyman Beecher, tried to link these documents to the Mayflower Compact and/or Puritan covenants, Green contends that the Declaration relies heavily on John Locke and uses Enlightenment terms for God. Furthermore, the Constitution makes no reference at all to God, a point which Green notes sparked controversy at the time of the ratification debates.

Although these contentions of Green's will no doubt frustrate some conservatives, he also presents evidence that undercuts the narrative of the Founding put forth by many secularist, progressive historians. For example, he shows that the Founders were uniformly in favor of religion and that Washington was a firm believer in divine providence. Washington was

convinced that God spared his life during the French and Indian War and was responsible for the Americans' victory in the Revolution. Washington issued two Thanksgiving proclamations as president and declared "religion and government to be interdependent and mutually reinforcing" in his Farewell Address (150). When Jefferson became president, he allowed the Capitol to be used for Sunday services and attended them on occasion. And when plans were considered for the new nation's seal, Franklin proposed Moses leading the children of Israel to the Promised Land. Clearly, none of the Founders was much of a church-state separationist.

In his conclusion, Green expresses his disappointment at the many writers who have tried over the years to simplify these complex issues. Green is to be commended for his efforts to chart this complicated and politically-charged topic. From the Pilgrims and the Puritans up through the Federalists and Antifederalists, he has labored to give all of his subjects their due.

John F. Quinn

Salve Regina University

Roberto Ramón Lint Sagarena. *Aztlán and Arcadia: Religion, Ethnicity, and the Creation of Place*. New York: New York University Press, 2014. Pp. xi, 207. \$75. cloth; \$25 paper.

Given Junípero Serra's recent canonization, which launched debate over the memory of California's Franciscan Missions, Roberto Ramón Lint Sagarena's *Aztlán and Arcadia* is timely. The volume examines overlapping projects of historical interpretation in California since the Mexican-American War (1846-48). Lint Sagarena approaches the topic through identity and cultural analysis with a particular interest in religion and architecture. The result is an engaging contribution to the history of California and to American identity.

The book portrays California as a space for the creation of public histories, a process that mixed mythology, genealogy, and religion. Chapter 1 focuses on the incorporation of the territory into the United States and introduces one of the book's central themes: the deployment of history, especially religious history, to legitimize the control of space. A new Arcadian vision of California emerged, connecting Franciscan evangelization there to Puritan settlement in the Northeast and marginalizing Mexican and indigenous identities. This process helped "Americanize" Catholicism via the Spanish colonial legacy at a time of heightened anti-Catholicism elsewhere.

Chapter 2 observes a shift as regional literature and Mission revival architecture emphasized California's "domesticated exoticism" (86). Mexican and indigenous identities experienced further marginalization, the former through excoriation of Mexican secularization and the latter as an inevitable victim of Manifest Destiny. By the twentieth century, the Spanish Catholic heritage was integral to an ecumenical regional identity—the main theme of Chapter 3. Lint Sagarena explores this through analysis of historic preservation, tourism infrastructure, and civic pageantry and relates it to the contemporaneous rise of revolutionary nationalism in Mexico.

As California's ethnic Mexican population grew, particularly through migration, newer generations found themselves outsiders—physically and figuratively—to both American and Mexican societies. The final chapter analyzes one set of responses to this position: the creation of an alternative history of the American Southwest based on the Mexica mythology of Aztlán. By examining poetry, muralism, and the regulation of public space, Lint Sagarena pieces together the evolution of Chicano identities into the end of the twentieth century.

With so many ingredients in a small pot, the resulting stew can seem muddled. Lint Sagarena mitigates confusion with a 'Coda' to end each chapter. The religious theme also maintains coherence, but the relationship between religion and religious culture is occasionally underexplored. Analysis of the Chicano cultural hybridity, for example, barely mentions the relationship of the Church and its theology to important elements of Chicano activism. Lint Sagarena's minimal engagement with historiography on nationalism (he refers to Hobsbawm's "invented tradition" but not Anderson's "imagined communities") and some of the contextual phenomena may stunt its wider appeal. As does its narrow view, which offers significant Asian and African American communities little attention.

As a study of how communities develop popular histories for various reasons, Lint Sagarena's work has considerable value. It reminds us that the history of the region, and arguably the country, has long been contested. While students will need supplementary reading lists fully to appreciate the wider implications, they will nevertheless find the arguments digestible and provocative.

Mark Petersen  
University of Dallas

Mario J. Paredes. *The History of the National Encuentros: Hispanic Americans in the One Catholic Church*. New York: Paulist Press, 2014. Pp. xxiv, 222. \$27.95 paper.

This is a remarkable and well-researched book about the response given by Hispanic American Catholics to the Second Vatican Council's Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, which is concerned with the Church's necessary attention to the transformations that occur in human cultures. Accordingly, this reading the signs of the times was precisely what led the US Bishops to embrace the idea of multicultural inclusion and to embark on the movement that gave rise to the Encuentros. Mario Paredes' perspective is that of a player. Himself an American Hispanic/Latino, he was both a contributor and a participant in the invitation to create consultative bodies as a means of assessing and evaluating the state of the Hispanic/Latino Church in the United States.

This volume offers little about the daily experience of Hispanic/Latinos in the pew. Instead, and enticingly so, Paredes delves into each of the three National Hispanic Encuentros, exploring their historical context, their purpose, preparation process, the working documents, the conferences in themselves, and the findings that eventually spearheaded the creation of the National Pastoral Plan for Hispanic Ministry. Beyond the detailed chronicle of each Encuentro, Paredes identifies not only the strengths and weaknesses of each Encuentro, but also the consultation process that took place during this initiative. In fact these were genuine grassroots endeavors; and the reader is led toward a profound understanding of what was at stake. A "from the bottom up" methodology brings new insights to the Encuentro table. The impressive array of information published here also makes it possible to understand the magnitude of the Encuentro Movement. Moreover, the great detail with which each Encuentro is presented is excellent. This is no small feat, given that Paredes drew his material from a short list of books and documents that cover this topic.

Paredes seems to give no preference to a particular position; he narrates the historic encounter that has been taken place between two cultures, presenting true facts that became part of the working documents and conclusions of the Encuentros. In offering his readers



such an incredible historical resource, Paredes helps us to understand the American Hispanic/Latino Church of the present, whether some well-known realities, such as the value Hispanics/Latinos place on family life or some other realities rarely seen, such as their growing sense of identity as an integral part of the American Church. In the latter instance, he presents their slow but sure leadership formation and reaches the conclusion that Hispanic Catholics and their leadership must work within the structure of the U.S. Church.

The vision that wins out in this volume, however, is that of the Encuentros' being an integral part of adult faith formation, not only in the Hispanic/Latino Church in the United States, but in the formation of the American Church as a whole.

Pia Septién  
University of Dallas

Christopher Shannon and Christopher O. Blum. *The Past as Pilgrimage: Narrative, Tradition & the Renewal of Catholic History*. Front Royal, Virginia: Christendom Press, 2014. Pp. xiv, 174. \$35. cloth; \$20 paper.

Ironically, a temptation presented by this provocative, and aphoristic, text is . . . to indulge in what many would discount as a series of improper, escalating reductionisms regarding the purpose of history, and historians. For example:

Just as the craftsman working in a material medium provides some object that can be used in the course of the pursuit of those higher, spiritual ends, so also the historian and the poet, the philosopher, and even the theologian produce things made of words that help Christians to pursue their final end: the life of charity, both temporally and in eternity.(80)

Or, to affirm Alasdair MacIntyre's argument regarding the essential educative task of "the transmission of the life of the virtues" and thus to acknowledge "the centrality of the virtue of right judgment --- a firm, habitual disposition to evaluate practical matters in light of an adequate conception of the common good" and then, firmly, to locate this foundational moral task as proper to the historical vocation as a critical exercise: "... an historian is certainly some kind of judge, for what else would we call someone who weighs evidence about past deeds for the sake of delivering some account of them?" (85)

Or finally to pronounce the master historical narrative itself: "History is not progress, nor decline, nor a dialectical struggle of progress and decline. It is, rather, the story of man seeking Jesus Christ and, more importantly, Jesus Christ seeking man." (xiii) And thus, the title of this profoundly challenging little manifesto: history as a narrative of the pilgrim. The modern (postmodern?) response is swift: this is an inappropriate professional burden and an unacceptable reducing of a social science of the observable (and verifiable) to a special, unauthorized pleading. But, not history in its modern, value-free, and scientific incarnation.

In their rebuttal, the authors offer a brief, but pointed discussion of the professional ("Victorian"!) historiography of the past century, highlighting the foundational significance of the "scientific" history of that formidable exemplar: Leopold von Ranke. The traditional commitment to this scientific "objectivity" proudly boasted of then, and even occasionally

now, is not simply dismissed out of hand given the various non-neutral tendencies barnacled on the contemporary historical enterprise: positivism or nationalism or political and/or gender aspirations, etc. The critical use of sources, various new methodologies more clearly opening the past to our interested gaze, the development of a particular story or “problem” through a humane sensitivity to historiographical issues and scholarly discussion (and disagreement)... all of this associated with a modern, critical assessment of the past... this is not an unwelcome development to the authors. Once again to indulge a temptation to reductionism: the larger issue to the authors is what is the “usual” and unexamined super-structure at work in the beginnings of the American historical profession in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and alive today: “The new historians committed themselves to the ideal of writing history free from... personal and political biases. They understood historical inquiry as the pursuit of empirically verifiable facts about the past and the establishment of verifiable relations of cause and effect among these facts.” (42) This common-sense empiricism privileged reason... undercutting tradition and “deep memory,” or, today, any common sense of... truth... in our disenchanting postmodern world disengaging rapidly now, and ironically, from the Enlightenment project of triumphant reason! Each man (and woman) has their own truth, their own idiosyncratic meaning! It is simply a “community” of personally-defined “diversity.” Our lives are compartmentalized as we see fit. The antidote offered here by the authors? It is not a confessional or apologetical historiography, but rather the willingness to integrate faith and culture in a particular, very troubled moment in human history, but in the service of the authentic *common good*. And in a moment of great cultural disarray, the opportunity of the Catholic historian, with an alive sense of the horizon of a graced human adventure, to join the public conversation is present, and withal, according to the two Christophers, an act of charity. They are calling for an integrated, non-compartmentalized historical vocation that looks to the story of the common good *and* the real, humanity’s common pilgrimage and its particular historical circumstances. And yes, in its own way, this vocation, as any for the Christian, is an act of evangelization:

As historians seeking to revive a tradition-based historiography in service of the Catholic community, we find ourselves in a similar relation to the Academy. As the early Christians won converts less by argument than by the example of holy lives, so we can only hope to win converts by depicting holiness in ways that are compelling and convincing to a postmodern world all too willing to accept that history is a slaughter bench, a war of all against all in which only the strong survive, until defeated by someone stronger. (132)

As specific examples of such a vital historiography, the authors discuss in two separate chapters the well-regarded scholarship of the celebrated British historian at Cambridge University, Eamon Duffy, and Benedict XVI, both working from within a self-reflective, and thoughtful, Christian cultural tradition. The authors, though, suggest that the holy enterprise that they would promote will not be the special preserve of professional, academic historians in those perpetually shady groves, but in fact a common vocabulary articulated in various communal settings, from museums to state parks to elementary and secondary education.

This review would not pretend to offer a final word on this text. It is provocative, learned,

and direct. It is not in itself the authors would argue a resurrection of some sort of sectarian ghetto, but rather a manifesto for a leaven that has a good claim to be part of the discussion of history in our contemporary world, and even among Catholic scholars! The relationship of faith and culture of course is hardly a new issue. But in the end, it is perhaps permissible to underscore the charity at the heart of this small gem by a glance at a document surprisingly absent from this text, and not necessarily limited in its application simply to the world of higher learning:

22. University teachers should seek to improve their competence and endeavor to set the content, objectives, methods, and results of research in an individual discipline within the framework of a coherent world vision. *Christians among the teachers are called to be witnesses and educators of authentic Christian life, which evidences attained integration between faith and life, and between professional competence and Christian wisdom.* All teachers are to be inspired by academic ideals and by the principles of an authentically human life. (*Ex Corde Ecclesiae*)

I would expect that the authors would approve of my italicization of the persisting call to a holy, and holistic life, even among historians! And, ultimately, the enduring task of charity, to which all, in their particular circumstances, are called.

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Julia G. Young. *Mexican Exodus: Emigrants, Exiles and Refugees of the Cristero War*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015. Pp. xiii, 271. \$74 cloth.

Few Americans know much about the Cristero War, an armed rebellion of Catholic militants against the Plutarco Calles regime that inflamed Mexico in the years 1926-1929 and claimed the lives of an estimated hundred thousand people. Yet, as Julia G. Young argues in her recent book, the Cristero War was a “transnational conflict that had a profound impact on tens of thousands of Mexican emigrants during the war years” (180). Indeed, thousands of Mexican Catholic refugees streamed across the Rio Grande during the Cristero rebellion, including two thousand priests and nuns, and a considerable number of Catholic bishops and archbishops. From the American side of the border, some of these refugees aided the Catholic rebels and even launched armed raids into Mexico in support of the Cristeros. The Tenorio expedition, an abortive plot to spark a Catholic uprising in the Mexican state of Coahuila, was planned by a group of Cristero supporters who met at the Robert E. Lee Hotel in San Antonio.

Young begins her book with a brief overview of religious tensions in Mexico dating back to the nineteenth century. As she explains, President Benito Juárez introduced anticlerical restrictions on the Catholic Church, which were later placed in the Mexican Constitution of 1857. During the long regime of Porfirio Díaz (1876-1911), constraints on the Catholic Church eased considerably. However, with the collapse of the Díaz regime in 1911, Mexico descended into civil war in which constitutionalists fought the guerilla armies led by Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata.

After a complicated series of events, which Young explains succinctly, Plutarco Elías Calles came to power (1924-1928), and he intensified persecution against the Catholic Church, expelling Catholic clergy, closing Catholic schools, and outlawing religious orders. Armed conflicts broke out between the Calles government and Catholic rebels, who were concentrated in the three Mexican states of Jalisco, Guanajuato, and Michoacán.

In subsequent chapters Young narrates the story of the Mexican diaspora in the United States during the years of the Cristero War. For the most part, these religious refugees settled in the Southwest and the Midwest, with large concentrations in El Paso, San Antonio and Los Angeles. From the U.S. side of the border, Cristero supporters started newspapers, founded political organizations, smuggled arms, and raised money to support the Catholic rebels. Three armed expeditions were launched from the United States, all ineffective.

Young then goes on to describe efforts on the part of the U.S. government to thwart arms smuggling into Mexico. This job was undertaken by the Department of Justice, the newly formed Border Patrol, and the U.S. Customs Service. In addition, the Mexican government operated a network of spies to monitor the activities of the anti-government elements in the United States.

As Young explains in chapter 5 of *Mexican Exodus*, the Cristero War came to an end in 1929 through a political settlement brokered with the help of the Vatican and the American ambassador to Mexico, Dwight Morrow. This settlement, known as the arreglos or arrangements, permitted the Catholic clergy to resume religious services and allowed for most Catholic exiles to return to Mexico. Remarkably, the Cristero battlefield commanders were not consulted during the negotiations, and the Cristeros' desire to remove anti-Catholic provisions in the Mexican Constitution went unaddressed. Eventually, however, the Catholic armies laid down their arms, although fighting broke out again briefly in a second *Cristada* during the 1930s.

Young's book is an important contribution to scholarship on the Cristero War. She argues persuasively that the War helped shape the identities of the Mexican immigrants of the United States, making them acutely aware of their religious heritage. In a particularly intriguing section of the book, Young explains how the Cristero martyrs, including some who were officially canonized by the Catholic Church, have been embraced by the Mexican-American community.

"In the end," Young concludes, "it is apparent that the Cristero War comprises an integral, deeply felt part of Mexican-American popular religiosity," and she predicts that "the legacy of the Cristero War—particularly its history of martyrdom and militancy—will continue to retain symbolic significance, and to shape religious and political identities, for Mexican Catholics on both sides of the border" (180). *¡Viva Cristo Rey!*

Richard Fossey  
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## Article Abstracts

### **“MEXICANS MIGHT SOMEDAY BE THE SALVATION OF THE CHURCH”: THE WORK OF THE BISHOPS’ COMMITTEE FOR THE SPANISH SPEAKING, 1945-1970**

By Todd Scribner

This essay focuses on one major avenue through which the American Catholic bishops began to systematize their outreach to Hispanic Catholics in the United States: the establishment and development of the Bishops’ Committee for the Spanish Speaking in 1945. During the twentieth century the Church’s engagement with Hispanics became increasingly systematized on the local and national levels. The essay begins with an account of the creation of the National Catholic Welfare Conference’s Bureau of Immigration in 1920, briefly compares the Bureau’s activity along the Eastern seaboard ports of entry with that of the Southwest border, and highlights some of its immigration work done in El Paso and in the surrounding area.

The bishops’ engagement with Latinos became more regionally focused and interconnected following the establishment of the Bishops’ Committee for the Spanish Speaking (BCSS) in 1945. By the late 1960s this engagement became institutionalized on a national level once the headquarters of the BCSS was moved from San Antonio to the NCWC’s Washington, DC office. This study expands on the existing literature related to the Church’s engagement with Catholic Latinos, and it also serves as an institutional history that examines the tensions that developed with the centralization of power in the Washington, DC Bishops’ Conference, on the one hand, and efforts to devolve power to the local level on the other.

### **JUDGE LEANDER PEREZ AND THE FRANCISCANS OF OUR LADY OF GOOD HARBOR: A SCHOOL INTEGRATION BATTLE IN BURAS, LOUISIANA, 1962-1965**

By David J. Endres

The church of Our Lady of Good Harbor, located southeast of New Orleans in the town of Buras, provided for the educational needs of its members – white and black – by organizing two segregated Catholic schools. The Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration in Mishawaka, Indiana, taught in both schools, while the Franciscan friars provided pastoral and sacramental care. The Buras church became embroiled in the fight for racial integration when New Orleans Archbishop Joseph F. Rummel mandated integration of the parochial schools beginning with the 1962-1963 school year. The most vocal opposition to school integration in Buras came from Leander Perez, powerful political boss and district attorney in Plaquemines Parish whom Rummel had excommunicated in 1962 for provoking his fellow Catholics to disobedience and rebellion. Through intimidation and violence, Perez and his allies successfully prevented the integration of the school despite the efforts of the Franciscans in Buras.

**“THE MOST EXTRAORDINARY ORDINARY PERSON”: CHARLENE RICHARD,  
THE LITTLE CAJUN SAINT, AND THE GIFT OF REDEMPTIVE SUFFERING**

By Nancy Autin

Charlene Marie Richard was born on January 13, 1947 and died of lymphatic leukemia on August 11, 1959. She spent her last days at Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital in Lafayette, Louisiana, where she offered her prayers and suffering to God for the benefit of others.

For those living in Lafayette Parish and surrounding areas, the name Charlene Richard is likely a familiar one, and she is affectionately known as “the little Cajun saint.” In the years since her death, believers in the young girl’s intercessory power have multiplied. Many of these, including the hospital chaplain who ministered to the 12-year old in her final days, have prayed and lobbied for her canonization. In promoting their cause, believers attribute numerous miracles and answered prayers, including remission of cancers, survival of premature infants, and conversions of lapsed Catholics among others, to the prayers of Charlene Richard.

This essay tells the story of Charlene Richard and includes excerpts from testimony by two Catholic priests who were deeply influenced by the life of this extraordinary girl. Father Joseph Brennan ministered to Charlene during her final days, and Father Floyd Calais was pastor of the Catholic parish where Charlene is buried. Father Brennan and Father Calais both provide strong testimony of Charlene’s intercessory powers.

**THE GRAND OLD MAN: CHRISTOPHER EDWARD BYRNE, FOURTH BISHOP OF GALVESTON  
(1918-1950)**

By Sister Madeleine Grace, C.V.I.

Christopher Edward Byrne (1867-1950) served as the fourth bishop of the Galveston Diocese from 1918 until his death in 1950. This biographical sketch details Bishop Byrne’s many accomplishments during the years he was prelate of Galveston Diocese (later the Galveston-Houston Archdiocese). The author outlines Bishop Byrne’s achievements as Bishop of Galveston and also gives readers a glimpse into his character and sense of humor. As reflected in two of his pastoral letters, Bishop Byrne was a vocal advocate for public modesty and a strong supporter of the Legion of Decency, the Catholic organization that was founded to combat immorality in American movies.

**THE GOTHIC CHURCHES OF THE DALLAS DIOCESE: A PHOTOGRAPHIC ESSAY**

By Steven T. Landregan

Steven T. Landregan, retired Archivist and Historian of the Diocese of Dallas, compiled a collection of representative Gothic-style Catholic churches that were erected in the Dallas Diocese during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Although many of these churches were quite modest, often consisting of no more than a simple rectangular structure,

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most were distinguished by a prominent cross and by arched windows or doors that gave them a Gothic architectural quality. Many of these churches were built at a time when the railroad was expanding in North Texas, and new Catholic parishes were being formed to serve the families of Catholic railroad workers.

